



The USA or Europe? – Mexican Migration Imaginaries of the Twenty-First Century and the Role of Fiction

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Declaration

I, Judith Vera Retzlaff, hereby certify that this dissertation, which is 21,961 words in length, has been written by me, that it is a record of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree. All sentences or passages quoted in this dissertation from other people's work (with or without trivial changes) have been placed within quotation marks, and specifically acknowledged by reference to author, work and page (if available). I understand that plagiarism – the unacknowledged use of such passages – will be considered grounds for failure in this dissertation and, if serious, in the degree programme as a whole. I also affirm that, with the exception of the specific acknowledgements, these answers are entirely my own work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Retzlaff', with a stylized, cursive script.

(Signature of candidate)

Synopsis

In light of recent shifts in emigration figures from Mexico and the overall lack of engagement with the subjective dimension of the phenomenon, an analysis of the migration imaginaries presented in twenty-first century Mexican fiction sheds light on the cultural debate surrounding the issue within Mexican society. Highlighting the role of fiction for the creation of these imaginaries, a transmedial narratological framework devised for textual application permits the comparison of these representations both regarding their destinations – the USA or Europe – and considering medium-specific differences for the filmic (*La misma luna* and *Guten Tag, Ramón*) and the prose productions (*Señales que precederán al fin del mundo* and *Méjico*). The underlying question of the state of the master narrative of the American Dream and a possible European counterpart contextually guides this discussion of imaginaries both on the level of the story and the discourse. The findings from these two levels are, then, used for a comparative analysis with the aim of deducing the possible implications of fictional creations for migration and its societal stigmatisation. In that, the fictional material is considered in view of its real world impact and its ability to shape both migration imaginaries and societal structures.

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‘[N]arratives instil norms and shape our understanding of what we, and others are doing.’ (Gallagher 2011: 33)

1 Introduction

Since the turn of the century, migration figures for Mexico have come to contradict the stereotypical view of the country merely as a sender of migrants to the USA. Not only has migration towards the USA turned negative, that is, more Mexicans are returning than leaving (Gonzalez-Barrera 2015), but recent statistics also suggest that ‘la década de 2000 trajo un cambio sustantivo: la consolidación de España como el segundo país de destino fuera del continente americano’ (Córdova Alcaraz 2015). Considering that overall net migration has remained negative (CIA 2016), these statistics point towards a shift in both pull and push factors for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, with a larger number now choosing the European continent as their destination. What these statistics fail to provide, however, is an attempt to explain these factors and the migrants’ aspirations. Especially in the current political climate, where European governmental institutions are actively working on strengthening their ties with Mexico,¹ while its northern neighbour is toying with the idea of an impenetrable wall, it is worth asking whether the American Dream, the master narrative of the immigrant that goes from rags to riches in the land of the free, still is a major influence in current depictions of migration in Mexico.²

While migration studies are now a thriving interdisciplinary field and copious amounts of research have focussed on Mexico both as a country of emigration and as a country of immigration for Central Americans, the engagement has usually a) been limited to Mexicans migrating to the USA and b) not delved into the driving forces behind the migrants’ motivations and aspirations in much detail. Nelly Salgado de Snyder portraying the social

¹ They have, for example, established projects such as the Año de México en el Reino Unido, y del Reino Unido en México (2015) or the Año dual Alemania-México (2016-17).

² The term ‘American’ to denote only the citizens of the United States, albeit geographically not inclusive, will be used in this project for lack of a better adjective in English.

networks already in place for migration between the USA and Mexico as the main motivation, for example, concludes by saying that migration has come to be ‘un estilo de vida’ (2002: 104) for many Mexicans moving to the USA. While this is certainly widely considered to be correct, it does not reach beyond structural factors and, therefore, omits a more detailed study of ‘la dimensión subjetiva de la migración’ (ibid.: 103).

In order to provide a different angle to this widely studied phenomenon while bearing in mind that describing this ‘subjective dimension’ for the entirety of migrants presents an impossibility due to its being a question of individual identity, this project will consider portrayals of emigration in fiction. This will provide ample material for the study of the twenty-first century Mexican migrant not only towards the USA, but also towards the European continent in a space where the characters’ subjective identity, that is feelings and aspirations, can be decoded. Such an approach can reveal aspects of migrant identities and aspirations that are not widely studied, because the question of identity in fiction is not a search for individual identity per se, it is a search for the identities promulgated in popular media, which, in turn, create imaginaries – a term which will be defined shortly – that may inspire or discourage migration in reality. It thus differs from attempts to define the real identities, such as Octavio Paz set out to do in his famous *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950). Yet, using narratological tools, this approach will generate an insight into the factors behind the creation of what will forthwith be called migrant imaginaries. As will later be shown, fictions are of special value to this study since they not only portray the migration narratives that are already in place, but they also have the ability to add new ideas to a notion that causes polemic reactions in the political sphere.

In order to provide a balanced analysis, this project will consider four main texts from different media, in which emigration from Mexico or the life of Mexicans in their destination country is a central theme in at least one plot strand. In view of the claims of duality in Mexican society, which will be discussed in the following chapter, both depictions in

mainstream cinema, which is closest to the most widely consumed media, and prose, a medium with dwindling readership, will be taken into account. This duality of media will provide for a clearer distinction between the popular and the more exclusive conception of migration. Two of the chosen texts, furthermore, focus on migration towards the USA – Patricia Riggen’s *La misma luna* (2007) and Yuri Herrera’s *Señales que precederán al fin del mundo* (2009) –, while Jorge Ramírez-Suárez’s *Guten Tag, Ramón* (2014) accompanies its Mexican protagonist on his journey to Germany, and Antonio Ortuño’s *Méjico* (2015) examines the migration flow between Mexico and Spain. Another text, namely Ximena Sánchez Echenique’s *Por cielo, mar y tierra* (2010), will be used as a case study for the creation of the narratological framework.

This comparative approach will determine how the migrant is represented in twenty-first century Mexican fiction across media and whether these representations confirm both the recent shifts in statistics and the assumptions of a more negative portrayal of the USA and a more positive angle on Europe due to current political trends and efforts. It is important to stress that these texts, especially the novels, are distinctly texts of emigration, rather than immigration and, in that they provide, above all, their vision of Mexico and the reasons for their protagonists’ urge to leave it behind. To work with all of the aforementioned notions effectively, a framework for the application of the notion of the migrant imaginary to fictional texts will be created after the discussion of the current research state in the following chapter, which will highlight the relation between the fictional ideas and their reference world, that is, the real world.

2 Theoretical Approaches and Methodology

2.1 Emigration Narratives: Defining the Sending Country

All of the fictions chosen for analysis focus on the migration journey, but also portray the characters while they are still grounded in their lives in Mexico. Hence, the emphasis on emigration rather than immigration fiction. To be precise, the difference between fictions of immigration and emigration lies a) in the focus of the geographical representation, but also, and more importantly, b) the location of the target audience, in the case of the latter, in the sending country. While both types of fiction are centred around the migrant's subjective perception of their surroundings, emigration journeys include the actual process of transiting to a new destination and thus include their protagonists' decision-making processes and/or departure preparations. It is at the start of these migration processes that the work on imaginaries begins: the imagining of an unknown destination.

A useful notion to bear in mind when considering the migrant's portrayal of the destination country is what Paul Gifford called the 'identitarian binome' of 'Self-and-Other', which is 'constructed and deciphered from the viewpoint of some first person subject, singular or collective – some represented or implied "I" or "we"' (2010: 11). The occurrence of an Other unquestionably implies a Self, and due to the lack of experience at the destination, the representation of this Other in emigration narratives, in fact, provides more information about the Self, the sending country, than the represented host; they portray an imaginary construction of a host country built on binary oppositions with the origin country, that is, constant comparisons with the Self. Considering, then, that all of the fictions were written or produced by Mexicans and, due to linguistic and geographical distribution, supposedly mainly for a Mexican audience, this Self is assumed to be Mexican both in terms of individual and collective identity. As all of the narratives also partly take place in Mexico,

this holds true both on an intradiegetic and paratextual level. This, however, will be discussed later.

Defining Mexico and Mexicanness is slippery terrain. For a long time, the main referent for it has been Octavio Paz, who, in his landmark essay *El laberinto de la soledad*, ponders upon the ‘dualidad’ of the Mexican nation by connecting his ideas about contemporary issues to the aftermath of the Spanish Conquest. His famous chapter on the ‘hijos de la chingada’ even today still spawns appraisal like, for example, that of Daniel Morales, who in an article in the online portal *Cultura Colectiva*, a popular cultural news outlet, closes his article as follows:

Es lo que somos, lo que fuimos y lo que seremos, los hijos de la chingada abandonados por la madre o exiliados de su seno por voluntad propia. Nuestra soledad sólo sirve para encontrarnos (...). El mexicano es un hijo de la chingada y un chingón al mismo tiempo. (2015: n.pag.)

Paz’s text is held up as a point of identification. In fact, one has to wonder whether the author has read beyond the famous chapter portraying Doña Malinche as the symbol for Mexican society as *mestiza*. Paz’s notion ‘de chingar o de ser chingado’, clearly points out the violence and patriarchy of Mexican society and portrays it in a Darwinian sense of survival of the fittest with the women being left out of the equation apart from their role of providing the offspring (cf. Paz 1992d: 32). While *El laberinto de la soledad* finally discusses Mexicanness in more universal terms, popular media outlets seem to overlook the fact that Paz’s essay is a lot more internationally oriented than the first four chapters imply:

Europa,(...) vive ahora como nosotros: al día. (...) Por tal razón el mexicano se sitúa ante su realidad como todos los hombres modernos: a solas. En esta desnudez encontrará su verdadera *universalidad*, que ayer fue mera adaptación del pensamiento europeo. (...) La mexicanidad será una máscara que, al caer, dejará ver al fin al hombre. (...) Esto es, la filosofía mexicana, si de veras lo es, será simple y llanamente filosofía, a secas. (1992c: 71; emphasis added)

Not only does Paz refer to Europe as a shaping force for Mexican society, he also implies that the Mexican solitude is a necessity for finding the humanistic, universal values that remain hidden under the ‘máscara’ that is Mexicanness rather than merely a way to

‘encontrarnos’, as Morales put it. By appealing to the notion of universality, Paz finally boils his essay down to the human essence of ‘mexicanidad’ where neither colonial hegemony, nor the notion of national achievements, such as a national philosophy, are of importance; ultimately, the restriction of nationality ceases to be relevant: Mexican philosophy becomes philosophy, Mexicans become humans – ‘a secas’ – and, in that, he adds the globally oriented future outlook to the Mexican national identity.

More importantly for the discussion of imaginaries, however, is the notion of the ‘dualidad’, and, in light of the above-mentioned identitarian binome, this becomes even more obvious when considering Paz’s journeys to the United States and Europe, which are a constant point of comparison for his ideas on Mexicanness. William H. Kattrer even stated that Paz ‘argues that Mexico’s entire population is a sub-class which exists in dialectical opposition to the more developed societies of the world’ (1986: 12). Considering the notion of human universality, it is necessary to add that, according to Paz, ‘los hombres modernos’ in Europe, the USA and Mexico, in theory, live ‘al día’ regardless of their geographical location. Paz does, however, establish a stark contrast by stating that ‘[c]uando llegué a los Estados Unidos me asombró por encima de todo la seguridad y la confianza de la gente, su aparente alegría y su aparente conformidad con el mundo que los rodeaba’ (1992b: 6). The United States are, thus, presented as an outwardly integral society. Only his repeated use of ‘aparente’ lessens the positive vision slightly. Simultaneously, considering the Self-and-Other, he implies that he perceives Mexican society in opposite terms. What Octavio Paz, then, really suggests is that Mexican societal structures have not reached the same level of modernity as those in Europe or the USA, because the ‘concepción de la vida social como combate [en México] engendra fatalmente la división de la sociedad en fuertes y débiles’ (1992a: 48). The *débiles*, who constitute the majority of the population, cannot but serve the *fuertes*, who often ‘confunden los negocios públicos con los privados’ (ibid.). He presents this duality as the reason for Mexico’s not reaching the same level of modernity as other

nations – from becoming *hombres modernos*. In the 1950s, Octavio Paz, therefore, added to an imaginary of idealisation of the Other, that is, the USA and Europe, where the duality of *fuertes* and *débiles* is not ‘aparente’. The national struggle of ‘chingar o ser chingado’ is, then, complemented by the gaze towards the idealised Other. That is, the duality within the Mexican society is presented as antiquated and juxtaposed with European and American modernity.

Another salient and more recent voice when it comes to the definition of Mexican identity – that of Roger Bartra – gives a similar account as Paz, in that it presents Mexican society in terms of a duality: ‘hay una cultura de la sangre y una cultura de la tinta [que] se enfrentan y se entrecruzan’ (2013c). He elaborates that

[l]a cultura de la sangre está ligada a la exaltación de las identidades, a la lucha revolucionaria y a la defensa de las patrias. La cultura de la tinta exalta la pluralidad de escrituras e impulsa argumentos impresos en papel y no en los campos de batalla (ibid.).

It is important to note here that Bartra repeatedly states Mexicanness as being myth: ‘el mito de la identidad del mexicano’ (2013a). His approach towards the matter is, therefore, generally geared towards uncovering the myth, rather than defining an actuality. However, the parallels to Paz’s text can easily be drawn; Bartra’s conception of ‘blood’ and ‘ink’ overtly opposes a group of people guided by more instinctive and natural concerns – blood – and those with an intellectual mindset – ink. While society is thus equally depicted as split in two as with Paz’s *fuertes* and *débiles*, for the question at hand, Bartra’s binary is more convincing in terminology, because it does not imply an attribution of power levels to either of the two per se.

It is Bartra’s non-value-ascribed duality defined for Mexican society that triggered the choice of medium for this project. Rather than describing one group as primitive and the other as intellectual, however, this project is going to consider texts according to their reach; assuming that *la cultura de la tinta* requires a vested interest in cultural productions that may

often be inaccessible to the other group, be it for financial reasons or lack of interest, the project will draw both on resources that are accessible to a mass audience, mainstream films, and texts that are presumably only consumed by a rather small circle, the literary works. The analyses will show whether the sociologists' pronounced dichotomy of identities within Mexican society, is also reflected in the differently consumed media. Mexican identity is, furthermore, also approached as a myth – or imaginary -, which can be presented to different audiences in any manner the author or producer sees fit.

While *El laberinto*'s first publication dates back to 1950 and even Paz conceded that '[l]as preguntas que todos nos hacemos ahora probablemente resulten incomprensibles dentro de cincuenta años' (1992b: 2), the presence of duality still seems to be a prominent concern in Mexican society. This has not only been demonstrated by Roger Bartra's more recent notion, but also by Daniel Morales's above-mentioned article, who still reads Paz's work as a confirmation of Mexicanness. According to these theorists, a societal background of opposed identities is, then, the starting ground for the emigration narratives treated in the following chapter. Returning to the identitarian binome mentioned at the start of this sub-chapter, the Self that is defined through its Others in the emigration narratives, is thus in a constant inner-national struggle between Self-and-Other. As the analysis of a medium catered to only one of these two would be limiting it to only one set of imaginaries, this project will attempt to elicit imaginaries that may be catered to both the adepts of *la cultura de la sangre* and *la cultura de la tinta*. This analysis of different sets of imaginaries can obviously only be an approximation, but it can provide an insight into the different migration narratives and the filters through which they are perceived.

2.2 Imaginaries and the Role of Fiction

It is important to bear in mind that the above notion of Self stems from a sense of community within a nation. Although the question of the nation is not a primary concern of this project,

the ideas surrounding its conception introduced by Ernest Renan and Benedict Anderson shed light on the importance of the imaginary for the structuring of societal cohesion through the creation of shared narratives. Renan, questioning the ontology of the nation, concludes that it has to be understood as ‘a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future’ (1990: 19). This idea is complemented by Benedict Anderson, who, in his seminal work on imagined communities, justifies his concept of the nation based on communal imagination by referring to ‘the members of even the smallest nation [who] will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (2006: 6). Both theorists thus explain their conceptions of societal structures by means of imagination or feeling and assume that these imagination processes are shared across a large spectrum of people.

While an imaginary, dream or aspiration held by one character or person can effortlessly be understood as relevant for his or her development, even the pinpointing of a shared set of imaginaries results in a rather difficult task. How can a concept as loose as the imaginary, or in its earlier French coinage *l’imaginaire*, be shared? Especially considering that it has been defined, according to Jacques Lacan, as the non-linguistic, and therefore imperceptible, part of the human psyche (cf. 1982: n.pag.)?

The imaginary evades any sort of manifestation in its first and strictest sense; fiction comes into play in its attempted articulation: Wolfgang Iser, working on questions of literary anthropology, describes the imaginary as ‘diffus, formlos, unfixiert und ohne Objektreferenz’ (2014a: 21),³ but also elaborates that:

[d]as Imaginäre ist kein sich selbst aktivierendes Potential, sondern bedarf der Mobilisierung von außerhalb seiner (...). Daraus folgt: dem Imaginären eignet keine

³ My translation: ‘diffuse, shapeless, unfixed and without object reference’.

Intentionalität, vielmehr wird es erst mit einer solchen durch die jeweils erfolgte Inanspruchnahme aufgeladen (2014b: 377).⁴

In other words, the imaginary requires an external vehicle to manifest itself, which also adds intentionality to it. As Winfried Fluck asserts referring to the above, one such vehicle can be fiction: 'Iser's approach (...) describe[s] the imaginary as a potential that nourishes fiction but also needs fiction in order to be able to manifest itself' (1996: 424). Fluck himself explains that fiction 'provid[es] a Gestalt to that which is otherwise unnameable', which constitutes 'an important act of articulation (...) which helps to make the imaginary accessible to individual self-fashioning as well as to cultural self-definition' (ibid.: 443). In a newer chapter from 2013, Fluck still maintains his position regarding the role of fiction when he claims that 'literary texts or aesthetic objects function as a host for readers who use them in parasitical fashion' (2013: 246). He later clarifies that '[t]he important point here is that the transfer between two worlds that are far apart (...) becomes possible by way of analogy' (ibid.). This idea of analogy or hosting is, in fact, nothing but the reader's (or viewer's) identification with the fictional scenarios. The merit of fiction, then, lies in its capacity to press imaginaries into a palpable form, which can be consumed by a recipient. Combining this notion of the materialisation of imaginaries in fiction with the aforementioned imagined communities, fiction emerges as a potential promulgator of ideas that can be shared within a society.

It has to be stated that the notion of sharing through fiction rather than empirical means has been dealt with by various scholars in the context of Transcultural or Migrant Literature. Pauline Berlage, for example, defined the genre as a means of 're/deconstrucción constante de las subjetividades' (2013: 48), while Paul White pointed out that

[c]reative or imaginative literature has a power to reflect complex and ambiguous realities that make it a far more plausible representation of *human feelings and*

⁴ My translation: the imaginary is not a self-activating potential, but requires external mobilisation (...). Consequently: it is not inherently intentional, but charged with intentionality through usage.

understandings than many of the artefacts used by academic researchers (1995: 15; emphasis added).

Both Berlage and White, therefore, suggest fiction as a medium for voicing subjectivity, especially in the migrational context. As is often the case with literary research, however, they do not venture any further to explain why it is fiction that is ideally disposed to take on that role. Similarly, when explaining his analysis of national identity in cinema Carlo Celli described that his ‘approach derives from the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (...) who wrote about mimesis (imitation), how art can imitate reality and represent nature’ and that

‘[w]hen elements that define a nation’s historical and cultural identity appear in popular films, it is possible to see such imitation in action (...) [s]tudying specific national cinemas with attention to how stories and motifs repeat reveals the deep cultural and sociological essence of a nation’ (2011: 1).

Heinz-Peter Preußer when studying collective identity formation in Germany similarly pointed out that film as a medium achieves ‘eine Ikonografie zu perpetuieren’, ‘die späteren Generationen als der authentische Ausdruck der Geschichte etwa des Nationalsozialismus oder des Zweiten Weltkrieges erscheinen kann: Nicht die tatsächlichen Ereignisse werden so tradiert; sondern die medial verarbeiteten’ (2016: 151).⁵ Preußer alludes to the power of fictional representations of historical events for those who have not witnessed them. Considering that migration is as distant to some as is the historical past, the same applies to the notion at hand. While using art in any medium as an expression of national identity risks oversimplification due to the influences and driving forces of each individual producer, Celli’s approach regarding patterns in creative production is useful in conjunction with Preußer’s ideas of art turning into perceived authenticity. Closing the gap of why fiction is ideally predisposed for the creation of societal cohesion, these theorists’ ideas combined would suggest that credibility can be created through the repetition of a narrative pattern.

⁵ My translation: ‘the perpetuation of an iconography’ ‘that may appear to later generations as the authentic expression of the history of, for instance, national socialism or the second world war: not the actual events are thus handed down, but those that are medially processed’.

Rather than considering both types of fictions, novels and film, as media which ‘truly can explain the world one country at a time’ or ‘a direct expression of a cultural heritage or national identity’ as Celli invoked (2011: 7), they will be used as an access point to ideas regarding migration in society.

Firstly, then, fiction has the capacity to both shape imaginaries into perceivable *Gestalten*, external mobilisers, and thus enables the creation of new imaginaries; it shapes imaginaries and enables their deconstruction in order to re-create them in a new form, which may be repeated within cultural productions to reach authenticity. Apart from these enabling powers for imaginaries, however, fiction is also an ideal conductor for ‘feelings and understandings’ due to the intimate experience it creates between itself and its recipient. Lisa Zunshine, who merges literary criticism with cognitive theory, in fact, assumes that

[l]iterature pervasively capitalizes on and stimulates Theory of Mind mechanisms that had evolved to deal with real people, even as on some level readers do remain aware that fictive characters are not real people (2006: n.pag.).

Dwelling in profound detail on the implications of Theory of Mind and the concomitant notion of metarepresentationality would not further the mapping of the notion of the imaginary in its fictional form greatly and will, therefore, be left untouched for now. Suffice to say, that the general consensus on the issue is that the fictional representation of characters and their actions is processed by the brain in a similar way as is information received by a sending entity in the real world, albeit with a so-called ‘source tag’, which is connoted by the meta in metarepresentationality (cf. Sperber 2000; Zunshine 2006; Herman 2013). While this source tag imbues the experience with a certain distance, the fiction’s content and discourse are stored in semantic memory as is general knowledge (Zunshine 2006). The brain does, therefore, not distinguish directly between an interaction with a real or a fictional character. Zunshine, furthermore, supposes that this ‘may mean that our enjoyment of fiction is predicated – at least in part – upon our awareness of our “trying on” mental states potentially available to us but at a given moment differing from our own’ (ibid.). In short,

the imaginaries and ideas served to us by fiction (and other narratives) are assumed to enter the cognitive system in a similar way as real experiences and allow their recipient to test out situations he or she has not experienced in real life. Cognitively, then, migration, or emigration narratives, as well as acquaintances' or relatives' stories, may serve as a starting point for aspiring migrants to experience migration second hand, before making the decision to take action themselves. Moreover, readers or viewers of migration fiction without the intention to migrate may perceive the fictive information similar to general knowledge, which, in turn, filters their perception of the act. In that sense, the role of fiction in the creation of narratives not only influences the intradiegetic imaginaries but may radiate beyond its medium's limitations into the real world.

Overall, then, the relationship between fiction and the imaginary is mutual in that they are mutually dependent on each other for their creation; the authors of works of fiction cannot but materialise imaginaries that have been induced by other productions or events and the imaginaries created through them. Considering that fictions provide information to their recipients in an intimate fashion, which resembles that of an interpersonal interaction, they appear to their recipient as cognitively real. This complemented by the statistics and economic findings mentioned in the introduction turns fiction into an ideal vehicle for the elaboration of a cultural response to the empirical data as it links the otherworldly fictionality to reality. In fact, what Celli calls 'national identity' appears similar to what I will call the 'third-level imaginary'. A term I chose due to not pretending to describe the feeling of unity present in Mexican (or any) society, which is implied in the charged term that is 'identity'; imaginaries imply a societal debate, a coil of ideas strung together by a cohort of people that grew up in the same region and have therefore had access to the same material. All of these consciousnesses are said to be united in their collective or national identity, which, to me, gives the term too much volatility, if it does not bespeak its inexistence given the multitude of people within societies today. Diverging slightly from early definitions of imaginaries as

that which happens in the mind of an individual prior to analytical processing, I will use the term as denoting the part of a person's or culture's mind that is interpretable from their voicings. The term not only refers to the individual's imagination processes, the uninterpretable mind, but also implies the interpreter's creative licence in decoding, or imagining, another entity's interiority clouded by the sender's intentionality when manifest. How fictions are mediated to their recipients, however, also depends strongly on the medium they are presented in and the stylistic devices that can be accessed through the latter.

2.3 Representation across Media: Cinema and Literature

There is no doubt that differences in the representation of migration subjectivities may and will occur not only in terms of content, but also due to the medium-specific requirements in literature and cinema. However, rather than pointing out all the differences between the two media relevant for this project, which would entail an exhaustive list of textual and visual stylistic devices, I will point out the media's commonality and its limitations. The theories underlining this approach mainly fall into the category of narratology, and in more specific terms: transmedial narratology, which combines the study of media – textual, visual, audial, cognitive and kinetic – with the study of narrative. Due to the extensive amount of publications in the field, which draws on both the structuralist beginnings chartered by the likes of Vladimir Propp or Gérard Genette and more recent approaches, such as David Herman's work, *Story Logic* (2002), the topic will only be presented in its most condensed form and with reference to some of the recent publications, which often enough summarise the backlog of research in great detail. This will, nonetheless, provide sufficient material for the study of both the cinematic and literary productions at hand.

Firstly, Ansgar Nünning's review of Herman's above-mentioned work, sheds light onto the general perception of narrative within the field of cognitive transmedial narratology: he summarises that '[i]n using the phrase "story logic" in the title of his study, [Herman]

means to suggest that narratives not only have a logic but also are a logic in their own right because stories are cognitive strategies that help humans make sense of their world' (2003: 883). Departing from this notion of stories as a universal vehicle for meaning-making regardless of the choice of medium, the narratological level susceptible to the different media's possibilities will be highlighted through their common core here, while specific stylistic devices will be left for the analysis of the texts. The main similarity for the four texts, as stated in the title and various instances above, is that they can all be considered fiction and, in that, share their use of fictionality and imagined elements for the portrayal of their narratives.⁶ This common ground allows for the analysis of many aspects regardless of medium, since it is through the filter of this fictionality that the narratives' contents and settings - or storyworlds - are portrayed. For this project, the fictionality of the works is determined by their not being narrated as real events, but stemming from the imagination of their authors and producers.

Moving on from this and considering the narrative created within this fictional realm, it can certainly be stated that, to borrow Vladimir Propp's term, the *fabula*, or story, is mainly medium-unspecific. The discourse, or *sjuzhet*, however, is prone to medium-specific manifestations. Considering the representation of subjectivity across media, Jan-Noël Thon made the following observations:

narrative representations may not only represent storyworld elements, first, as they are (subjectively) represented in the mind of a particular character and, second, as they are (intersubjectively) perceived by a group of characters, but also third, represent *storyworld elements that are not perceived by any character in the storyworld at all* (2014: 70; emphasis added).

While all of these form part of the storyworld, are thus intradiegetic, the third type of elements and their representation, just as the narratives' discourse in general, is only perceived by the recipient and therefore takes on an external value: an external reader or

⁶ For a discussion of the shared fictionality of different media, see: Zipfel 2014.

spectator is required for their interpretation. In other words, the medium-specificity can only be apprehended by the narrative's recipient, as opposed to the characters in the storyworld. This is relevant for the discussion of imaginaries in migrant narratives in so far as it stresses the difference between the imaginaries depicted within the storyworld, or the protagonists' dreams and aspirations (intradiegetic) and those outside of it, that is the tone and how those intradiegetic imaginaries are presented and/or perceived by the author and/or society (external). Considering, then, that intradiegetic representation is medium-unspecific, while the discourse can be heavily imbued by a medium's stylistic possibilities, a gap between filmic and novelistic representation is conceivable.

The importance of this possible disparity is revealed when looking at the Mexican public's general reading and viewing habits: as hinted at in the introduction, the cinematic representations can be considered more popular, that is, the narratives are more widely consumed. This is corroborated not only by the two films' box office success (cf. Forbes Staff 2013; *Expansión* 2014), but also by the results of the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes's (CONACULTA) *Encuesta nacional de lectura y escritura 2015-2018*, which states that 'ver la televisión es la principal actividad recreativa de la población'. Overall, they attest that 53% of the survey's participants stated that watching TV was one of their common recreational activities, while 9% mentioned going to the cinema and 21% reading (2015: 17). It is, thus, appropriate to conclude that the two films used for this study have reached a greater audience than the two novels.

In light of these socio-economic statistics, another of Thon's statements is worth considering: 'the motivation [behind a story] can be both internal (as is the case with characters' plans and goals) and external to the story(world) (as is the case if authors "want to tell a good story")' (2016: n.pag.). Obviously, the external motivation is not limited to a single author's desire of excellence. A countless amount of mechanisms may influence a producer of a cultural or artistic work. Bearing in mind, also, the idea of story as a vehicle

for meaning-making, the main task in applying transmedial narratology to these texts is the elaboration of both the internal and the external motivations portrayed, the latter of which provide a commentary on the former, which links the internal storyworld to the reference world. The use of two media in the discussion of migrant imaginaries is, therefore, internally irrelevant, while their stylistic presentation caters them to different audiences, and gives them a different reach; the storyworld elements have to be compared to their external portrayal.

2.4 American Nightmare and European Dream?

The pinpointing of the subject matter of these internal elements cannot be left untouched. In this case, it is the question of the migration destination and the journey required to reach it: ‘si hay algo que define a ese mismo corredor geográfico [Estados Unidos-México], además de su alto dinamismo en términos comerciales y de la alta movilidad humana, es la violencia que lo recorre’ (Álvarez Velasco 2012: 190). It is in these words that Soledad Álvarez Velasco describes the conditions for migration between the United States and Mexico. In the same Volume, Yerko Castro Neira similarly defines the reality of the migrant as ‘[u]n proceso de enajenación cultural’ (2012: 154). Both theorists paint the bleak picture of Mexican migration towards the USA that the general public has grown used to in the past few decades, both from fictional and sociological evidence such as the above. In fact, these unsurprising statements leave room to wonder about the state of the once celebrated American Dream and if it still forms part of the societal imaginary for Mexican migration towards the USA.

The notion itself is typically characterised by Mexicans leaving their country behind to pursue their goals in its wealthier neighbouring state. In the literary sphere, this has led to the so-called Chicano movement and its academic counterpart, Chicano studies, which surged in the 1960s and directed its full attention to Mexican-Americans. Findings from this

field supplement the research for this project, because the ideas presented in Chicano fiction are evocative of the imaginaries present in the immigrant communities in the USA, which, at least partly, feed into the Mexican narrative due to family ties. Briefly then, the ‘from rags to riches’ narratives of early Chicano fiction supporting the idea of an American Dream, soon stopped presenting characters neatly assimilating into American culture and pointed towards the difficulties and hardships of the transcultural process, which has been discussed extensively: as early as 1973, Charles M. Tatum referred to Chicano fiction as ‘A Chronicle of Misery’ and stated that ‘[s]ome writers (...) express no hope for the future’ (15). Similarly, for the representation in film, Thomas G. Deveny refers to Alejandro Galindo’s *Los mojados* (1979) and states that it ‘explores a world of corruption along the border where irregular immigrants are victims of an exploitative mafia and evil border patrol agents’ (2012: 214).

More recent approaches have focussed on this same disillusionment by pointing out the idealisation of the destination country before arrival: ‘el escritor [de la literatura de la frontera] da testimonio de una utopía ya elaborada en la realidad extraliteraria, aprehendida en las ilusiones de los inmigrantes mexicanos’ (Mora Ordóñez 2012: 282f.). However, the success of the immigration experience, that is, the adaptation to American culture and acceptance of its ideals are later questioned: ‘se refleja la imposibilidad de integrarse al estilo de vida de los ciudadanos estadounidenses (...) los inmigrantes terminan aislándose en barrios donde repiten su historia de pobreza’ (ibid.: 288). Mora Ordoñez sees a tendency to depict ‘la utopía desmoronada’ of the American Dream grounded in dissatisfaction on a personal level. While critics thus imply that fictions have been and are portraying the harrowing realities of the transition from Mexico to the USA, statistics would still suggest that the American Dream of the land of endless opportunities still features in the migrant’s decision-making, albeit in dwindling numbers as shown in the introduction. Considering that the numbers suggest a shift rather than a cease in migration, the portrayal of the failing

American Dream, would in theory have been replaced by a new migration narrative, which might be geared towards the European continent.

The representation of Europe has certainly always featured in the Mexican narrative; one only has to refer back to Octavio Paz, who bases his whole construction of Mexican identity on the dialectic between Cortés and Doña Malinche. For the consideration of contemporary depictions, however, the paradox of the scarcity of publications on the topic has to be mentioned. While in the case of migration towards the USA, this only applies to the literary industry, migration narratives towards Europe are more of a rarity overall despite the increase in migration in recent years. Accordingly, academic inquiries of these notions or the perception of the European continent in Mexican literature are virtually inexistent. Marlene Rall makes for the rare exception as she studied the ‘*imágenes del alemán y de Alemania en México*’ (2001). Rall finds that ‘*la narrativa mexicana ha superado los estereotipos sencillos y toscos y las estrechas dogmáticas*’, but also concludes that Germany is ‘*el lugar de los dos extremos*’, which is questionable in itself (ibid.: 386; 379). The work is, furthermore, centred on Germany rather than this project’s focus on the migrant. Apart from this exception, the fictional sphere is thus mainly characterised by a lack of engagement with Mexican-European migration. On a global level, Europe has, however been discussed as the clear ideological counterpart of the USA by Jeremy Rifkin.

His notion of the European Dream is based on the ideas behind the creation of the European Union and presents the European imaginary as an emerging power on the global stage, or as the book’s subtitle suggests: *How Europe’s Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*. Rifkin purports that the latter ‘emphasizes the unbridled opportunity of each individual to pursue success, which, in the American vernacular, has generally meant financial success’, but claims that ‘a new European Dream is being born. It is a dream far better suited to the next stage in the human journey - one that promises to bring humanity a global consciousness befitting an increasingly interconnected and

globalizing society' (2004a: 3). He, furthermore, indicates that '[f]or Europeans, freedom is not found in autonomy but in embeddedness. (2004b: 13). His distinction is, therefore, mainly based on a tendency towards individualism or community in the USA or Europe, respectively, which is interesting especially considering Salgado de Snyder's notion about the networks and solidarity between Mexican immigrants mentioned in the introduction, while it also contradicts Annika Witte's presentation of Mexican and German cultural standards, which lists German culture as individualistic (2014: 45). Here, one has to bear in mind that Rifkin refers to the European Dream, rather than the European reality, and, therefore, only hints at the imaginary behind the creation of the European Union.

Having looked at conceptions of the American and European Dream, it is important to return to the scarcity of publications and distance the examples at hand from their counterparts in the USA. While the Mexican film industry has not shied away from producing various feature films on migration, literary production has been rare. The U.S., however, has produced both filmic and literary narratives; migration fiction written by Latin American immigrants, including Chicano Literature, has now certainly found its niche by tapping into post-colonial ideas and appropriating notions such as hybridity and transculturation for their own narratives. These stories by latinos or chicanos, albeit popular in the USA, are, however, not necessarily received with great enthusiasm in Mexico. Antonio Ortuño in a podcast on his reading of Junot Diaz, for example, explained that 'como muchos lectores latinoamericanos específicamente, pos, conservo cierta [sic] prejuicio en ocasiones hacia los hispanoamericanos que escriben en inglés' (*Letras Libres* 2015: n.pag). He implies a reluctant readership for Latino works in Latin America, which further reduces the amount of fictional engagement with emigration from Mexico within the society.

In fact, one genre engaging with journeys towards the USA that has become popular in Mexico and needs mentioning for the sake of completeness, are narratives constructed around drug trafficking and the so-called *narcocultura* (cf. Polit Dueñas 2013). While

violence and drug-related crime are a prominent feature of fictional engagement with Mexico's northern neighbour, the texts chosen for analysis form part of the fictional current engaging with migration to the USA for personal reasons, which allows comparability with the two Europe-bound narratives; *narcocultura* will, therefore, only be of tangential importance for this project.

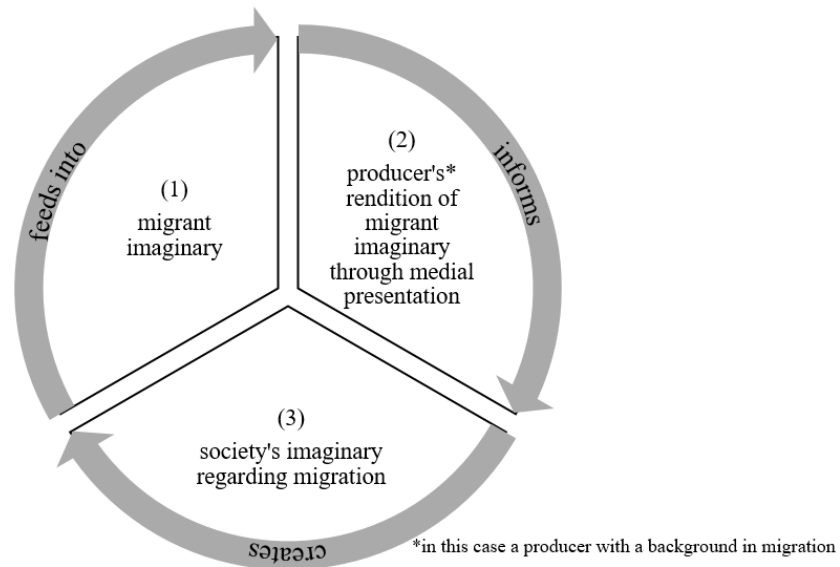
In short, while migration narratives are rife at an international level and migration, according to Dagmar Vandebosch, 'hoy se ha convertido en norma, más que en excepción' (2012: 5), depictions of Mexican migration for the Mexican public are scarce in literature – yet do exist – and abound in film, albeit only with a focus on the USA. Moreover, publications on the subject during the past few decades, appear to confirm the shifting migration statistics as the USA is represented in increasingly negative terms, while Europe is starting to feature in a few fictional representations. Before applying all of these contextual and theoretical strands to the texts in question, however, all of the notions will be shaped into a coherent framework for application to fiction.

2.5 Framework for Application to Fiction: A Case Study

We have now seen four topic areas loosely related to each other during the discussion of their current research state. For the present undertaking, however, it is vital to merge these notions of (a) the Mexican condition through the lens of migration, (b) the imaginary as portrayed in fiction, (c) the transmediality of these fictions, and (d) the contextual driving narratives into one coherent framework for application. In this, the more content-heavy parts of this quartet, (a) and (d), guide the application of the more structural and stylistic areas, (b) and (c).

Firstly, the filmic and novelistic productions will be analysed separately both due to the medium-specific differences in portrayal - (c) - and the content-specific notion of the duality of Mexican identity that has been found in sociological approaches - (a). The point

of departure for these separate analyses are the contextual discussions regarding the portrayals of destination countries, as well as the socio-economic statistics that shaped the topic overall - (d). Which leaves – (b) – the question of the imaginary, which is central to all of these observations. My following graphic rendering of imaginaries within societies will help explain how exactly the nature of the latter shapes the analysis of fiction:



The analysis of *what* is said about the migrant and his or her reasoning regarding the choice of destination country will be elaborated by the means of the protagonists' characterization and the information given about their migration aspirations – a fictional representation of (1) the migrant imaginary, or, the intradiegetic imaginary. Secondly, the text's comments on this first-level imaginary will be pointed out through an analysis of *how* this first-level is portrayed, which, in turn, generates a (2) second-level imaginary regarding migration: the rendering of a cultural producer, that is the impressions conveyed by a producer regarding an individual's imaginary, which is external to the text. And finally, after the analyses, the third level of the migrant imaginary (3) will be touched upon in a concluding analysis taking into account the two different media and the statistics from the introduction. It is important to note here, that by no means does this project pretend to venture any further than elaborating the imaginary as presented in fictional texts. However, it is also impossible to

look at the notions presented in a fictional work as if they emerged from a societal vacuum. The last part of the analysis thus attempts to relate the fictional findings to the real world, considering it as a vehicle of meaning-making and therefore as one voice within a larger political debate.

To further corroborate this approach a very brief analysis of what can be considered a blueprint for emigration fiction will be included at this point: Ximena Sánchez Echenique's *Por cielo, mar y tierra* (2010; *PCMT*), which portrays two migrants with different destinations during their preparations before departure and on the journey itself: Alfredo, a middle-class student who travels to 'el Viejo Mundo' and Benigno, a working-class father on his route to 'el Otro Lado'. What turns the novel into a blueprint of emigration fiction is (a) its content – the narrative ends before the migrants reach their destination – and (b) the use of generic terms instead of actual place names. While other intradiegetic and paratextual cues suggest Mexico as the setting, the narrative could thus be equally applicable to any other country.

Within this geographic unspecificity, the migrants' first-level imaginary is implied in the depiction of their home country: Mexico, from Benigno's viewpoint, is characterised by inequality and racism, which is hinted at through his frustration regarding social mobility. His main motivation is his daughter's well-being (rather than his own): 'allá, tu hija aprenderá inglés, irá a la universidad (...) y tendrá tantos hijos como y cuando ella lo decida' (40f.). This imaginary of a better life for his daughter linked to ideas of financial prosperity and, therefore, the American Dream presents the main driving force of migration, but also Benigno's deep idealisation regarding 'el Otro Lado' – from Mexican rags to U.S. riches. The middle class protagonist, Alfredo, follows a similar set of imaginaries in his preparations for doctoral studies in Europe. Alfredo's attitude shows that, for him, success is also linked to financial prosperity: 'se trata de tener buena ropa, una buena casa, un buen coche; en fin, de ganar dinero suficiente para vivir una buena vida' (73).

The intradiegetic imaginaries of both the working and the middle class protagonist are, therefore, similar. They suggest an adherence to the American Dream regardless of the destination country. This, however, is differentiated on the second-level imaginary, the one that is external to the storyworld and goes unnoticed by the protagonists: the juxtaposition of the entry paths is one of these external observations, which suggest Europe as the easier pathway and thus would confirm the statistics (cf. 169ff; 191f.). However, there is one aspect that overshadows this facile juxtaposition: the chapters told from the perspectives of the ‘things’ the narrators identify with. A newspaper article about the novel, in fact, cites the author explaining that ‘los personajes experimentan “un desprendimiento de los objetos con los que se identifican y así encuentran su identidad a partir del ser y no del poseer”’ (Flores 2010: n.pag.). Considering the exemplary nature of this analysis only Alfredo’s book, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince*, will be taken into account here, which holds a lengthy monologue about the effects of ‘things’ on human intimacy and self-knowledge:

cada vez que una persona se identifica a sí misma o identifica a los demás con un objeto, entonces el objeto se vuelve cosa y la persona identificada se cosifica. (...) Somos producto de su mente, de sus fantasías, de sus sueños, de sus miedos, de sus deseos (...). El problema es que ustedes los hombres están tan familiarizados con las cosas que nos consideran parte de su familia (136f.).

The passage distinguishes clearly between objects, things, humans and persons. Both objects and humans constitute the neutral state, the essence of a thing or being as stated in the novel itself: ‘Esencia. *m.* Naturaleza propia y necesaria de cada ser. – Parte fundamental de una cosa’ (42). Both humans and objects lack ascribed value. Value turns them into persons or things respectively. By ascribing the same level of value to beings and objects, objects are humanised and humans objectivised, which equalises persons and things. It is a clear critique of elevating material creations onto the same level as personhood; material wealth loses importance, while family values and non-material interactions are highlighted.

In that, the text’s second-level imaginary, links it to materialistic concerns rather than the importance of a choice of destination; both Europe and the USA lose importance for the

representation of migration in view of these materialistic undertones. It is the ridiculousness of a talking object within the setting that constitutes the personification of the values ascribed to objects as explained in the book's monologue. The repetition of 'como si' together with verbs in the conjunctive tense, referring to an object's lifelessness corroborate the falseness of the assignation of the same value as is ascribed to humans and mock the aspiration of leaving family behind in order to gather more things, which are nothing but 'producto[s] de su mente'. Now, as mentioned above, both protagonists leave their home country striving for financial success, symbolised mainly by the acquisition of stable, highly paid employment – the American Dream. The personification of their aspirations about two thirds into the story, however, turns the protagonists into models not to be followed: the American Dream should not be the reason for leaving one's life behind or as the author herself asked in an interview: 'El país no es más que el conjunto de familias y si estas familias están desintegradas por la distancia, ¿qué nos queda?' (*W Radio* 2010: n.pag.). *PCMT* thus presents a fiction where the internal, first-level imaginary differs from the external, second-level imaginary presented by the author. While this only hints at the disparity between internal and external imaginaries, the representation in the more geographically specific texts, will give an insight into the cultural workings, that may result in a shift in migration numbers.

3 Application to Text

3.1 Identity Loss and Criminal Humanity: Migrant Imaginaries in Prose

As outlined before, the geographically-specific novels were chosen mainly due to including an emigration narrative – one towards the United States, the other to Spain – but also for being one of the very few examples of emigration literature from Mexico to Europe in the case of *Méjico* (2015) and for not focussing primarily on drug-trafficking in the case of

Señales que precederán al fin del mundo (2009; *Señales*). In spite of their providing substantially different portrayals of migrants and external migration imaginaries, they, however, share patterns in the description of the sending country.

Yuri Herrera's *Señales* takes the reader on Makina's perilous journey to the United States in search of her brother. Guided by a *coyote*, she has to withstand adversity and human depravity on her way, only to find that her brother agreed to an unlawful contract with an American family to take their son's place in the war, changing his official identity. During their eventual meeting, both realise that he no longer is the person she was looking for, which sends her on a different path than she had expected. Antonio Ortuño's *Méjico*, on the other hand, portrays a family history marked by migration throughout its recent generations: the Almansas flee war-torn Europe and settle down in Mexico, while their grandson, Omar, finds himself in such a precarious situation that he is required to find refuge with a cousin in Spain, the country his mother idealised during his childhood: *el Concho*, the right hand of Omar's lover's boyfriend comes after him to seek revenge for his *patrón*'s passing. Due to police intervention he is finally captured and imprisoned leading Omar to return to Mexico, where he lives a peaceful life, starts a family and forgets about his past until the two run into each other at a shopping centre seventeen years later. The two plot strands relevant for this analysis are Makina's illegal entry into the United States and Omar's refuge in Europe. They will be analysed regarding both their intradiegetic and external imaginaries in the following sub-chapters while the third-level imaginaries will be discussed in conjunction with the findings about the films later.

3.1.1 Intradiegetic Imaginaries in Literature

The intradiegetic imaginaries, that is the question of what is said about Mexico, the host countries and the migrants' aspirations within the storyworld, will be elaborated regarding three main concerns: (1) the protagonists' characterisation and their aspirations, (2) the

depiction of Mexico, and (3) the representation of the host country. Considering that this elaboration is mainly based on documentary evidence from the narratives, it will be explored in more brevity than the external imaginaries.

Starting with the *characterisation and aspirations* of the two relevant characters, their personalities are described in opposing terms. Makina, working as an operator of her hometown's only telephone, is depicted as a strong and determined woman, who knows how to defend herself when exposed to macho attitudes both at home and in the USA:

Se levantó lentamente sin quitarle la vista de encima, porque *cuando uno da la espalda por miedo es cuando más se arriesga* a que le sorrajen una patada en el culo; abrió la puerta del cajero y jarchó (*Señales* 81; emphasis added).

Although this scene implies a need to encourage herself by repeating a general statement – that which ‘uno’ does –, she achieves her goal by leaving the threat behind without any further consequences, which adds to her presentation as strong-willed and resolute. One of her main qualities, furthermore, are her linguistic abilities; she speaks three languages – an indigenous one, Spanish and English (cf. 9) – and is thus well-prepared for the journey she embarks on due to her mother's errand: ‘[s]u madre la Cora la había llamado y le había dicho Vaya, lleve este papel a su hermano, no me gusta mandarla muchacha, pero a quién se lo voy a confiar’ (12). Makina, furthermore, only leaves ‘para nomás volver’ (57). Her quest, that is her family reunification thus provides her only motivation. Due to the mythic nature of the novel, its protagonist is, in fact, not portrayed with much more emotional depth, which is not to say that she or her journey lack significance, but rather that her character exhibits formulaic traits. She is one ingredient in a migration myth.

Conversely, Omar, *Méjico*'s protagonist, who in the novel's first chapter, hides in another room while his lover is murdered, later, concedes that

[j]amás pensó en socorrerla o intervenir, sino en escaparse, y le inquietaba más que el Concho estuviera esperándolo fuera (...), a que el Mariachito le cayera a golpes a la mujer. A *su* mujer. (22; author's emphasis)

He is thus presented as disloyal and cowardly from the first pages, while the emphatic ‘su’ implies a certain macho-ism in his possessiveness – a complete opposite of *Señales*’s heroine. While this characterisation paints the picture of why he has to flee from Mexico to avoid *el Concho* and his own death, it omits one significant trait: his hybridity. As a child, he is, for example, portrayed at a stadium with his mother when he first experiences nationalist hostility: ‘Omar hasta ese momento se tomaba por parte de [los mexicanos] pero aquel día supo que, según las circunstancias, la nacionalidad no era un paraguas sino una alucinación’ (55). It is in this flashback that his illusion of Mexicanness breaks away and succumbs to his sober vision regarding both his Mexican and Spanish roots, the latter of which are forcefully made aware to him through his mother and situations like the above-mentioned: national identity is turned hallucination. In that, Omar’s lack of strength is explained through the weight of his hybridity and the environment he grew up in. His *aspiration* similarly diverges from Makina’s: rather than completing an errand, Omar sees ‘[u]na sola [opción], en realidad: el pasaporte español’, since ‘[l]os ferrocarrileros, colegas del muerto [patrón del Concho] y su sayón, tenían decenas de oficinas y contactos [en Estados Unidos]’ (36). Omar takes advantage of his family’s past to find the safest hideout destination.

Consequently, for both Makina and Omar, it is their life in Mexico and their family’s histories that exert a profound influence on their migration decision. Their home countries’ socio-economic conditions also weigh in, however: in Makina’s case, *Mexico* is mainly characterised by the absence of both her father and her brother, who separately left for the USA in search for a better life prior to the novel’s narrative (*Señales*: 31f.). These absences are significant as both present the reasons behind another’s migration decision: the father’s absence triggers the brother’s leaving due to the illusion of receiving the dead father’s property, while the brother’s absence initiates Makina’s own journey. Her hometown itself is furthermore described as

cosida a tiros y túneles horadados por cinco siglos de voracidad platera y a veces algún infeliz descubriría por las malas lo a lo pendejo que habían sido cubiertos. Algunas casas ya se habían mandado a mudar al inframundo, y una cancha de fut, y media escuela (11f).

Physically, the haphazard nature of life in her town is thus emphasised, where past indulgences have turned survival into a question of luck, and leisure amenities literally disappear; Makina leaves a town in need of repair, which is left behind by people like her brother, who cannot make a comfortable living. In this, the novels' two Mexicos converge: while Omar's Mexico is portrayed in great detail, including *el Concho*'s past marked by violence and rape, which sets of his career with the corrupt and dangerous *ferrocarrileros*, as well as both Omar's precarious situation before the former's imprisonment and the comfort when *el Concho* is behind bars (cf. *Méjico*: 60-69), all of these details are used to outline a Mexico that is classist and violent. Omar, however, shrugs this off when he blandly states that we are what we are – 'Somos los que somos' (214) – after he finally kills *el Concho*. He refers to his family when speaking in these essentialist undertones, but simultaneously betrays his resignation, his hopelessness of improving conditions in Mexico. In both cases, Mexico is thus defined by violence, physical dilapidation and corruption.

Returning to Gifford's notion of the Self-and-Other, these ideas about the Self are the protagonists' material compared to the Other, which emerges in the form of their *destination country*. Firstly, it is important to note that both of the migrants in these novels, do not indulge in excessive dreaming and imagining about their destinations; their motives are mainly practical. Omar even states that 'España era un tema que nunca le ocupó la mente más allá del gusto por unos platillos, ciertas palabras y algunas cancioncitas' (38). It is therefore their first impressions of the destination country that portray their attitude towards it. In Makina's case, 'la única tierra que vale la pena conocer', where 'se podía tener más que los demás' is principally defined by her ironic statements and her reaction to U.S. police officers, who round up immigrants to teach them a lesson and who try to humiliate one of

them by forcing him to document his own wrongdoings in writing (cf. 62f.; 109f.). Makina takes pencil and paper from the migrant and notes down the following paragraph:

Nosotros somos los culpables de esta destrucción, los que no hablamos su lengua ni sabemos estar en silencio. (...) Los que venimos a quitarles el trabajo, los que aspiramos a limpiar su mierda, los que anhelamos trabajar a deshoras. Los que llenamos de olor a comida sus calles tan limpias, los que les trajimos violencia que no conocían, los que transportamos sus remedios, los que merecemos ser amarrados del cuello y de los pies; nosotros, a los que no nos importa morir por ustedes, ¿cómo podía ser otro mundo? Los que quién sabe qué aguardamos. Nosotros los oscuros, los chaparros, los grasientos, los mustios, los obesos, los anémicos. Nosotros, los bárbaros. (109f.)

Her manifesto for *nosotros*, the Mexicans (and other immigrants) who are exploited on a daily basis, succeeds; the police officer turns away from the group. More importantly, however, it demonstrates a sense of unity through the repeated use of the first-person pronoun, while highlighting the diversity of migrants and their tasks in the host country. Considering that this occurs only a few days after her arrival in the United States, her ideas must also be imbued by her pre-conceptions. The manifesto is an amalgam of her previous imaginary and her first experiences in the USA. The sense of community is, however, corroborated throughout her journey within the country, when she receives support from her contacts: other Mexicans who already live north of the border, which confirms Salgado de Snyder's notion of networks already in place and facilitating the passage (cf. 22).

Omar's first impressions are depicted similarly:

Los árboles eran una masa hirsuta que recordaba los manchones de vegetación de los cuadros que su madre solía colgar en el comedor. La ciudad que gobernó aquel vetusto imperio donde no se ponía el sol le parecía una maqueta: el hostel, una casa de muñecas; los edificios, altos y estrechitos, libros en un estante (*Méjico*: 124).

The comparison of his surroundings with objects from his, or his mother's, past shows how deeply ingrained his childhood ideas about Spain are. His destination country feels artificial to him – like a 'maqueta' –, which, in spite of his purporting that Spain never occupied his thoughts, suggests that he had a very clear idea about it based on images, stories and books,

which are brought to life in his visit. As will be shown in the second-level imaginary, he later, however, moves on to describe the decrepit state of affairs in Spain.

Overall, the first-level, intradiegetic imaginaries in the novels are constructed around family ties and obligations, but are more pragmatic than one would assume from migration literature. Neither of the two novels presents an idealisation of the destination country; the ‘from rags to riches’ narrative does not feature in either of the two and financial gain is not an explicit concern in spite of the poor conditions portrayed in Mexico. Rather, the novels allude to their narrators’ necessity to cross the borders, which is assumed reluctantly by their protagonists: while it presents an act of bravery for the sake of her family’s peace to Makina, Omar sees it as a last resort, a refuge from imminent death in Mexico. The second-level analysis, including the external concerns that imply a comment on this internal imaginary will reveal how these protagonists’ ideas are presented to the public.

3.1.2 External Imaginaries in Literature

As the approaches to external imaginaries, that is, literary style and the use of frames for the narratives substantially differ in the two novels, they will be dealt with separately for the duration of this sub-chapter to avoid switching between the narratives. Starting with Yuri Herrera’s idea about his novel, who defined his neologism ‘*jarchar*’ as symbolic for the narrative, gives an insight into the text’s structure:

For me, this novel is about a character, Makina, who is in transition, who is moving in between countries, who is moving between languages, who is moving between identities. Jarchar defines a part of a poem, that is not strictly Spanish, not strictly Arabic; a part that used to be the last part of the poem, and very frequently it would be a feminine voice, saying good-bye. (Bady 2015: n.pag.)

In Herrera’s view, then, Makina is a hybrid character, or at least one in the process of hybridisation, a character ‘saying good-bye’. Now, the narratological realisation of this character is conveyed via a third-person focalisation, in which Makina’s thoughts are occasionally available to the reader. However, they do not give much insight into her

emotional state, rendering her aloof and somewhat stoic: on arriving in the United States she, for example, sees what she thinks is a pregnant woman resting against a tree in the desert ‘[y] pensó que ése era buen augurio si alguno: un país donde una que anda de cría camina por el desierto y se echa a dejar que ésta le crezca sin ocuparse de nada más’ (47). At a second glance, however, she realises that ‘era un pobre infeliz hinchado de putrefacción’, to which she reacts by looking at her coyote to see if ‘él también se había engañado pero no’ (48). This absence of relatable emotional cues – horror, dismay or disgust at the sight of a decomposing body – not only establishes the protagonist’s emotional unrelatability, it also adds to the formulaic fable-style or fairy-tale tone, which is reduced to only the essential bits of information. This is further corroborated by the chapters’ introductory moments such as the following: ‘[p]rimero no había nada. Nomás una tira de cemento deshilachándose en medio de la tierra blanco. Luego distinguió dos montañas chocando al fondo del paisaje’ (47). The short first sentence, reminiscent of the start of the biblical creation story, is added to by the use of descriptions of the natural environment. This depiction of Makina’s surroundings with the two clashing mountains in the background is not only significant in tone, however, on a content level the two mountains are represented in Mexica myth as one of many tests on the journey to *Mictlan*, which will be discussed in more detail shortly. In terms of style, the above description neatly showcases the text’s distance to its reader and especially the protagonist’s superficiality on an emotional level; the environment is, in fact, described in as much detail as the protagonist, which blends one into the other and renders them equally significant for the portrayal of the latter’s journey.

How is it, then, that, while the novel’s style suggests a focus on external depictions rather than an emphasis on the characters’ interiority, Cynthia-Marie Marmo O’Brien, one of the novel’s reviewers in its English translation pronounced that ‘[t]he brilliance of this novel is that, as grounded as it is in physical experiences, it is [the] psychological space that it most inhabits’ (n.d.: n.pag.)? It is mainly the mythological frame hinted at in the

description of the mountains that could be interpreted as a psychological investigation within the fictional portrayal; the nine chapters' titles are, for example, taken from the Mexica myth about the journey to *Mictlan*, one of the realms for the dead in Aztec cosmovision. Eduardo Matos Moctezuma's research on the pre-Columbian perception of death and life in Mexico, shows that these nine stages correspond exactly with those found in the *Códice Vaticano 3738* (ca. 1566) (2003: 50; cf. Appendix A). He states that 'los que morían de muerte natural irán a Mictlan, para lo cual las almas de los difuntos tenían que atravesar nueve lugares o escaños' (ibid.). Bearing in mind that the novel's first sentence reads: 'Estoy muerta, se dijo Makina cuando todas las cosas respingaron' (*Señales*: 11), an interpretation likening the migration journey to the journey into the realm of the dead is not far-fetched and would approximate the tasks to overcome in each chapter to a more psychological level.

However, the author himself explained that his

purpose was to write a novel in which it was not necessary for the reader to know all these other things. (...) [W]hat I wanted to do was to write a story in which the reader could feel the density of that, but that they didn't feel they needed footnotes (...). It's not a re-creation of the myth; I'm using that myth as a found object. (Bady 2015)

Now, the story presented to the reader on the first level, as shown above, is comprehensible without the mythical framework, but it loses much of its depth when read without basic knowledge of Aztec cosmovision; it is Herrera's idea of considering the myth as a 'found object' within the work that lends the story its roots. While it is not a recreation of the myth – Makina is supposedly not dead and not walking through the nine levels into Mictlan –, the story presents an analogy to the journey to Mictlan, for which it uses the myth in 'parasitical fashion', to use Fluck's words. In that, it allows Makina to inhabit the mythical sphere for the reader, although she faces plain reality in her storyworld: the myth is the host for Makina's story. In a sense, Herrera presents a reading of the myth in a contemporary setting and very openly refers to one of the societal imaginaries that influenced his creation, albeit an ancient imaginary that is no longer commonly known.

The narrative's framework, in fact, gives an insight into the author's meaning-making process, drawing on myths, stories and experiences from his knowledge pool and fashioning a new outlook which combines all of the above in one palpable form. The first-level imaginary, that is Makina's imaginary, is therefore read and presented in light of an older tradition, which produces a second-level imaginary that comments on the first in two ways: (1) it lends grandeur to a common undertaking by presenting it in mythical fashion, and (2) it likens migration (to the USA) to death:

evocó a su gente como a los contornos de un paisaje amable que se difumina, (...) y entendió que lo que le sucedía no era un cataclismo; lo comprendió con todo el cuerpo y con toda su memoria, lo comprendió de verdad y finalmente se dijo Estoy lista cuando todas las cosas del mundo quedaron en silencio. (*Señales*: 119)

The final paragraph of the novel not only presents Makina in 'el sitio de obsidiana donde no hay ventanas, ni orificios para el humo' (ibid.: 113) – a basement nightclub where she is given a new identity –, it indicates death. Makina arrives in *Mictlan* where the world is silenced, and which ends the string of *señales que preceden al fin del mundo* as the title suggests. However, it is not 'un cataclismo', just as death is not as final in the Aztec cosmovision as it is in many other cultures. The loss of identity symbolised by the 'legajo', in which she finds herself 'con otro nombre y otra ciudad de nacimiento' (118f), is only the death of the protagonist as she was presented throughout the narrative, the storyworld's reality does not imply her actual death only because she enters a nightclub.

At the same time, the fact that only now, at the end of her journey, she finally understands 'con todo el cuerpo y con toda su memoria' that this is not cataclysmic, implies the necessity of experiencing migration or the loss of identity first-hand to understand her situation. In that, despite likening the loss of identity to death, which appears negative at a first glance, the event is not presented as catastrophic: first of all, the death of her first identity leads to greater understanding. Now, in Aztec myth, *Mictlan* served both as a place for eternal rest and is an ingredient in humanity's creation myth, *el Quinto Sol*, when

Quetzalcoatl, after the epochs of the four previous suns, travels to *Mictlan* to procure bones for the creation of humanity (León-Portilla 1959: 108ff.). Having reached this complete loss of identity, Makina's future is thus presented rather positively as a transition to a new era, a new sun; her identity loss is one ingredient for the creation of a new identity, with which she can 'entend[er] que lo que le sucedía no era un cataclismo'. The trials to get there, however, the offer of well-remunerated cartel work or the hopelessness while trying to find one individual within a large society (cf. 68; 87), are not easily overcome, just like not all the souls reach *Mictlan*.

Herrera thus sets up a second-level imaginary grounded in the Mexico's myth around death as a commentary on the first-level imaginary. Furthermore, by choosing *Mictlan*, rather than *Tlalocan* (the place for those who drowned or died in relation to water) or *la Casa del Sol* (for warrior's and women who died during childbirth), the journey is presented as natural.⁷ Makina's pragmatism regarding the journey also corroborates the naturality of the process as a common errand she is tasked with. However, the second-level narration also gives a distinctly Mexican flavour to the narrative and presents the end thereof in the USA: the end of the Mexican world is reached once the migrants accept their new identity.

Antonio Ortuño, on the other hand, presents a more fluid relationship in his novel in that he does not conceive of any form of ending, but the constant confrontation between two countries and identities. In an interview, he described his overall idea regarding the issue at hand in an analogy to a painting:

Ortuño recuerda una imagen que siempre le ha fascinado: la pintura donde un guerrero azteca y un guerrero español se atraviesan con las armas mutuamente. "Los dos están jodidos, y parece que es lo que ha pasado en México. Claro, una parte sometió a la otra en muchos sentidos, pero las dos se jodieron igual". (Alfonso 2016: n.pag.)

⁷ *Mictlan* was the place for those who died from natural causes (cf. Matos Moctezuma 2003: 48ff.).

Such an explanation is evocative of the image of Spain as brutal coloniser, Bartolomé de las Casas' famous Black Legend, that is still present in México, and which Antonio Ortuño attempts to untangle in his work. He maintains that

[e]sta novela no es un ensayo doctoral ni una profunda indagación sobre la identidad, aunque puede tener esos y otros temas cruciales, pero deben estar en el contexto de una historia hipnótica. El único motivo de leer narrativa es saber qué pasa a continuación. (Alfonso 2016: n.pag.)

Ortuño emphasises the merits of fiction for the portrayal of cultural ideas as part of a 'historia hipnótica', but, in the end, the novel still presents a form of 'indagación sobre la identidad', some of which is overtly semi-autobiographical. He, for example, conceded that the scene included in the analysis of the first-level imaginary, in which Omar, as a child, learns about the hallucination of nationality, is based on the same happening to himself. The rest of the narrative, however, is pronouncedly fictitious (cf. Alfonso 2016). The author's idea about his novel is thus of a fictional discussion of migration highlighting both the Spanish and Mexican perspective, while still providing entertainment to the reader.

The narrative's focalisation adds to this idea of the (unnecessary) clashing of national identities through its multiple third-person focalised narrators:

Omar detectó una mirada sobre sí mismo, primero con titubeo, con pánico humeante después. Era el Concho: se limpiaba la boca con la servilleta y bebía su agua. Los había contemplado durante todo el banquete con el odio limpio y claro de un infante (*Méjico*: 164).

The above is one of many transitional paragraphs ending the narration from Omar's perspective and starting that from *el Concho*'s. It is this multitude of voices that allows for an in-depth portrayal of various characters without sacrificing the reader's intimacy with the perspective taken in every instant: in *Méjico*, these transitions, albeit rather frequent always initiate a larger portion of narrative from each character's perspective, sometimes even retelling the action of an already known event.

It is primarily this focus on multiple perspectives that provides the commentary on the first-level imaginary, as the extradiegetic narrator states when first introducing *el Concho*:

‘tenía nombre e historia, *tristemente*. Nadie es un apodo, nadie puede ser reducido a unas pocas líneas esenciales sin ser transfigurado en monigote’ (*Méjico*: 60; emphasis added).

‘Tristemente’ the stories being told are not one-sided, not as facile, as many presentations about migration or colonisation would suggest, and, similarly Ortuño includes two migration stories: one to Spain and one to Mexico. The above-mentioned moment of Omar’s perception of Spain – the *maqueta* – is therefore complemented by his grandfather’s first impression of Mexico:

la Ciudad de Méjico, una amalgama de palacios y chabolas en donde lo glorioso, lo impúdico y lo siniestro eran materia más que abundante. Madrid (...) e incluso Barcelona quedaban como simples colecciones de *casas de muñecas* a su lado. Méjico tenía de su parte la multitud salvaje y un esplendor que Yago sólo podía relacionar con el Oriente. También una miseria inmensa, crudelísima. (...) (185; emphasis added)

Comparing this to Omar’s impression of Spain included on page 30, the first striking similarity is the imagery used in the comparison of Spanish architecture to a doll house, which reinforces the idea of Omar’s grandparents’ influence on his perception, their similarity in being. They are, as he states, ‘la razón de su existencia’ (179). At the same time, both comparisons suggest Spain as the inferior, smaller opponent, in light of Mexico’s life-size. Rather than reading power levels into these descriptions, however, the novel presents inversions of the typical ideas surrounding colonialism, which is also alluded to by the frequent mentioning of Javier Mina, one of the few Spaniards, who helped liberate the Mexican people, and is quoted to have proclaimed ‘Mejicanos: permitidme participar de vuestras gloriosas tareas’ (160).

More importantly, however, Yago’s first impressions are as based on his experience as are Omar’s; he compares Mexico to ‘el Oriente’, probably reminding him of the Rif War his family was exposed to in the 1920s (cf. 127) just like Omar is reminded of his mother’s stories. By juxtaposing these two migration stories, Spain and Mexico are both turned into host and sending countries, which eliminates the stigma from Mexico, and emphasizes the

importance of timelines, that is current political and socio-economic events, for migratory trends; migration is not presented as a means for the accumulation of wealth, but as a necessity for survival in certain times.

As mentioned above, Ortuño, furthermore, includes a scene, in which Spain is presented as equally corrupt and decrepit as Mexico. Firstly, his cousin's, Juanita's, house in Madrid is presented as dilapidated (125). Moreover, the chapter describing Juanita's, negotiations to free her lover from her procurer (217-228), for which she kills the latter, but is sure to go scot-free as 'la policía se conforma con unas mamaditas' (225) in Spain, equalises even the level of corruption in Spain and Mexico. While this juxtaposition, turned equalisation, could be interpreted as a historical passing down of traditions of violence and corruption from Spain to Mexico through the colonisers, I would argue that Ortuño offers a more global vision of migratory processes, in which no country is exempt from the possibility of turning into a sending country, nor in which any country is immune to corruption and violence.

This 'globality', a term described by Héctor Hoyos as 'the literary representation of a broadening consciousness of the world as a whole' (2015: 2) is substantiated by two further aspects: the final lines of the novel and its music score. Starting with the latter, Ortuño explained that he 'suel[e] oír música mientras escrib[e] y relacionarla directamente con lo que pasa en el texto' (Ortuño 2015: n.pag). He, furthermore, created a *Youtube* playlist with the songs that influenced his writing of *Méjico* (ibid.). The soundtrack of the novel ranges from the patriotic Jorge Negrete song used as an epitaph for the first part – 'Yo soy mexicano | y a orgullo lo tengo | Nací despreciando | la vida y la muerte' (*Méjico*: 13) – to a translation of German folkloric rock sung in Latin, which Ortuño used as an epitaph for the whole novel – 'Somos viajeros. Nuestros padres están sepultados a la orilla del camino' (11). External to the storyworld, the novel thus introduces its ideas about Mexican-Spanish migration and national concerns with references to international cultural productions, which exemplifies

their globality: these global concerns, when applied to a local context, create what Omar termed the ‘alucinación’ of nationality.

Equally, the last chapter, focalised by Leon Almansa, Yago’s brother, whose point of view did not appear in the narrative before, concludes the novel as follows: ‘los hombres, desde Caín, solo habían conseguido parecerse en algo: todos eran criminales. Se miró las manos. Delincuentes, sí. Forajidos ganándose el jornal’ (235). Invisible to Omar’s or Yago’s eyes, the novel thus uses their life stories to illustrate the futility of nationalism by including them in a story of humanity’s global delinquency, while the ego-centric protagonists feel that their being ‘comidos por el crimen y la corrupción’ (Cobos 2015: n.pag.) is at least partly dependent on their location or their family’s essential traits. In that, their qualities and the corruption and violence are presented as distinctly human rather than distinctly Mexican or Spanish.

Both Herrera’s *Señales* and Ortuño’s *Méjico* thus comment on the first-level imaginaries held by their protagonists by adding a structural framework around the intradiegetic events that show them in a different light; while Herrera chooses an ancient myth that demonstrates that long gone wisdom may serve to understand the process of migration as a passage rather than a cataclysm, Ortuño goes further by making use of multiperspectivism to portray migration as part of human history and not a distinctly Mexican undertaking and therefore unties migration from geographical concerns altogether. The pattern in both novels, however, is that of not presenting notions of the American Dream neither intradiegetically, nor externally, but suggesting migration as a pragmatic decision, a possible necessity, depending on the individual’s circumstances.

3.2 Hardship and Recompense: Migration Utopias in Mainstream Cinema

Having considered the less widely distributed media, the following analysis of mainstream films will provide the second imaginary for the comparative discussion. Firstly, however, a

few words on the selection of the two films at hand are in order considering the abundance of material available. Why choose *La misma luna* (*Luna*) and *Guten Tag, Ramón* (*Ramón*) and not one of the many others? In the case of the latter, the choice is easily explained through its recent distribution and its presenting the only recent feature film focussing on migration to Europe. *Luna*, however, finds itself among various contenders, such as Walter Doehner's migration drama, *El viaje de Teo* (2008), or even Eugenio Derbez's box office success, *No se aceptan devoluciones* (2013). It is, however, only Patricia Riggen's film that combines both box office success and a primary focus on migration unrelated to narcoculture. As with the novels, the exclusion of primary material with protagonists, who are directly involved in the drug trade stems from the necessity to maintain the level of comparability between the destination countries, which would be hindered if one was overtly examining crime.

As for the film chosen for the U.S. context, in *Luna*, the viewer is not presented with a straightforward migration narrative, but a story of family reunion: Carlitos (Adrian Alonso), a nine-year-old boy, crosses the border illegally in order to find his mother, Rosario (Kate del Castillo), who left Mexico four years prior to the film's narrative for economic reasons. In addition to Carlitos's story of crossing the border, the life of Mexican immigrants in the United States is, therefore, exemplified by his mother. Jorge Ramírez-Suárez's *Ramón*, in fact, moves on from the theme of migration to the USA by centring its attention on a working class young adult, Ramón (Kristyan Ferrer), who unsuccessfully tried to enter the United States five times. The filmic depiction of his sixth attempt of emigration, to Germany, portrays his friendship with a group of German senior citizens in spite of cultural differences.

3.2.1 Intradiegetic Imaginaries in Mainstream Cinema

As with the intradiegetic imaginaries in the novels, the following will focus on three main aspects: (1) the characterisation of the protagonists and their aspirations, (2) the depiction of

Mexico, and (3) the depiction of the host country. In spite of only looking at two films, three protagonists are relevant, however. Their *characterisation and aspirations* are generally similar: all of them are depicted as being from a low-income and rural background. Carlitos is, furthermore, described as astute: he already works as an assistant to an unofficial emigration agency, for which he helps Doña Carmen (Carmen Salinas) connect migrants and mules (*Luna*: 17:00ff.). This portrayal as hard-working and articulate in English suggests his dedication in preparing for the reunion with his mother even should she not be able to come back for him herself. His sole motivation, consequently, is the reunification with his mother, whose own aspiration resembles that of Ramón; both her and Ramón leave Mexico to send home remittances and support their families economically. While Rosario is portrayed as a successful and hard-working immigrant in the USA, however, Ramón is an example of an unlucky emigrant, whose previous emigration attempts were all thwarted by *la migra* and dishonest *polleros*. His portrayal is mainly drawn around his honour: he does not accept work from *el Chiquis* (Jorge de los Reyes), the local drug lord, but aims to find a respectable employment elsewhere (*Ramón*: 10:00f.).

His decision to leave *Mexico* is, consequently, forced upon him by the employment prospects in his hometown, or, as his grandmother points out: ‘si no trabajas para el Chiquis, aquí no tienes chance’ (*Ramón*: 09:50f.). His hometown is depicted in a state, in which employment and success depend on the drug business that simultaneously eliminates those who oppose it (cf. 16:30ff.). Within the intradiegetic imaginary, it is this violence and forced poverty that characterises the Mexico outside of the confines of his family home – his mother and grandmother, who depend on him financially. In *Luna*, it is this notion of family dependence that is brought to the limelight. The importance of remittances from the United States is clarified at various occasions; other than his friend, Carlitos can, for example, sport new sneakers due to his mother’s monthly remittance of 300 USD (cf. 16:00ff.). This amount, albeit only moderate in the USA, is not only enough to provide for Carlitos and his

grandmother in Mexico, it also sparks Carlitos's unknown uncle's interest in his custody. In both films, the emphasis is, therefore, on poverty in Mexico and the possibility of providing financial stability for those family members that stay behind rather than the migrant abroad.

This sacrifice to provide for the family is questioned by Rosario when she learns about Carlitos's crossing and asks her friend: 'Y ¿qué tienen de maravilloso nuestras vidas, a ver?' (*Luna*: 62:00f.). The life in the USA, *her host country*, is unhinged by the news of her family's hardship back home, which renders her sacrifice ineffective. Heather Hewett, focussing on transnational motherhood emphasises the importance of Rosario's plot strand by going as far as classifying her as 'a martyr' (2009: 123). While Rosario does indeed sacrifice her own leisure time in her employment in two wealthy households, her position also reinforces Salgado de Snyder's notion of the network already in place in the receiving country: all of her social contacts are Latin American, possibly Mexican, immigrants, who are portrayed as a tightly-knit community supporting each other. The film, in fact, portrays a Latino community that shares no point of contact with American people apart from their work relationships, which is exemplified by the fact that the grand majority of the narrative is set in the United States, but nearly all of the conversations are in Spanish. *Luna* thus portrays a Mexican community transposed onto a North American setting.

Only very few instances provide a glimpse of a Mexican imaginary about the USA without previous experience in the country: in one of them Carlitos is portrayed while imagining his mother's surroundings via her words through the telephone. At this point, this imaginary, is however, not worth considering in much detail as his imagination corresponds exactly with his mother's actual surroundings (cf. *Luna*: 06:50ff.). The external imaginary will give greater insight into this congruence of imagination and reality. However, his crossing to the USA is presented as just as dangerous as his mother's, although as Deveny correctly remarks '[t]he film [only] glosses over the danger of a child left in a closed vehicle in excessive heat, as many immigrants' deaths have occurred in similar circumstances'

(2012: 243). The idea of the USA on this first-level is therefore characterised by the prospect of financial success and, in the case of Carlitos, his mother's words, but also by a perilous entry point and tedious working conditions.

While, as mentioned above *Ramón* starts with a reference to the above-mentioned dangerous journey to the USA, it quickly diverts its attention to the easy entry to Germany, a newer *host country* for Mexican migrants. Contrary to Rosario's and Carlitos's experiences in the USA, Ramón's time in Germany is imbued with ideas of linguistic and cultural pioneering; Ramón's only network in Germany, *el Güero's* (Héctor Kotsifakis) aunt, cannot be located once he arrives and he is completely left to his own devices. His ideas about Germany before and after arrival are, however, explained:

No sé. Yo imaginé Alemania así como... como un país con muchos edificios modernos, pero con soldados a caballo. Pensé que me iban a poner a cuidar algunos de sus caballos finos, pero qué diferente es ¿no? (86:00ff.)

His expectations demonstrate his idea of a place likened to a fairy-tale, where technology has taken a foothold in its modern design, but tradition is maintained; a place where he could work as a squire of old tales, which is countered by the hardships of his first days: he sleeps at a train station, then, in a basement without even having a coat during winter. Yet, in spite of these circumstances, he still describes Germany as 'un río rededor de castillos muy antiguos con gente blanca y güera, más que el Güero' (100:40ff.) after his deportation. Similarly, when his grandmother enquires about how he was treated, he replies: 'de lo mejor que te puedes imaginar' (ibid.). Germany maintains its fairy-tale charm even after Ramón was signalled to the authorities and deported, because his 'hada madrina', Ruth (Ingeborg Schöner), leaves him 'algo así como una herencia alemana' (86:20f.; 109:17f.), which adds up to about one million Mexican pesos. Not only does this financial surprise reward him for his hardships, however, it is made possible by the German welfare system, which secures Ruth's future despite her sending her savings to Mexico. Germany is portrayed as a well-

structured society that is welcoming of people through lenient entry policies and with a generous aging population.

In short, the storyworlds of both films present similar push factors for Mexico as the starting point for their protagonists' journeys, which boil down to general notions of violence and poverty. The characters, who are mainly described as persevering and astute, albeit unlucky in the case of Ramón, enter their host countries with idealised expectations that are at least partly met: the USA and Germany are characterised by the network of Latino immigrants and the top-notch welfare system, respectively. These first-level imaginaries, in fact, resemble those portrayed in the case study above (*PCMT*) and focus on notions of the American Dream through their emphasis on financial gain (as a necessity to provide for their families). As with the novels, the second-level imaginary is substantial for the decoding of these imaginaries, however.

3.2.2 External Imaginaries in Mainstream Cinema

The films' second-level analyses have to take the audio-visual dimension of the narratives into account, which present the medium-specific difference to the novels. One of Marie-Laure Ryan's comments sheds light on the medium's visual capacities:

we must make a distinction between *how we* imagine the worlds of visual media and *what* we imagine about them. Cognitive scientists distinguish two modes that we use to store knowledge – as images and as propositions. (2014: 42; author's emphasis)

She moves on to explain that the 'images', those directly created by the medium, influence how the narrative is imagined, but that what is imagined depends on propositions that may be regulated by previous knowledge: she gives the following example: 'we imagine that Tintin is three dimensional (3-D) because he is a human being, but when we run the story of Tintin similar to a film in our head, we visualize him as two dimensional (2-D)' (ibid.: 43). Now, both films chosen for analysis are not cartoons. What this adds to the analysis, however, is that the viewers of a visual narration draw from their own experiences in re-

creating the storyworld of a film in spite of the visuals themselves being presented to them as finished. In their choice of stylistic devices, both films, in fact, take advantage of their audience's previous knowledge, mainly by creating juxtapositions and oppositions between the sending country and the two destinations as well as their protagonists' lives in each place. So, in spite of the spectators' possible unfamiliarity with the Others presented – a two dimensionality in knowledge – the films are rendered three dimensional, that is authentic, in the viewers' minds.

Considering this creation of perceived authenticity, it is important to bear the directors' ideas regarding the projects in mind: Patricia Riggen, in fact, explained that her idea behind *Luna* was to 'explore' the role of women in migration: '[t]hese women have no other options and make the most difficult sacrifice of all because no mother would leave her child unless she was desperate'. She added that '[w]hen people ask [her] if this is a true story, I tell them that it is based on 4 million true stories' (*Women & Hollywood* 2008: n.pag.). Consequently, *Luna*, after a flashback to Rosario's past of crossing the border, a dream she wakes from in shock, initiates the narrative's plot via a juxtaposition of Rosario's and her son's morning routines (cf. *Luna*: 01:00ff.). It presents alternating medium and medium-long shots of both protagonists' breakfast preparations initiated by Rosario's enquiring: 'Ya te levantaste?' (01:45). As the sequence is never interrupted, and their actions flow naturally, they first appear to occur in the same place, Rosario's question directed to Carlitos. It is later revealed, however, that she asked her roommate in the USA while Carlitos prepares breakfast for his grandmother in Mexico. This equalisation sets the tone for the rest of the narrative: Carlitos and Rosario live under 'la misma luna'; mother and child are still tightly connected in spite of their geographical distance.

Despite the difference in medium, the film, just like the novels, portrays this equalisation, through focalisation. Considering that this project focusses on emigration, it is Carlitos as a focaliser, who is of special importance despite the director's focus on women;

the process of migration revealed from the perspective of a child, in fact, allows Rigen to allude to the emotional dimension of the process overtly: Carlitos, for example, states that he feels abandoned by his mother when his efforts are not rewarded (cf. *Luna*: 67:00ff.). While novels allow for the inclusion of thoughts in their focalisation, the portrayal of thoughts and a character's interiority is more complicated in film. Stating thoughts in dialogue may often appear inauthentic, but due to Carlitos's young age the inclusion of his feelings in a dialogue is authentically acceptable.

At the same time, however, Carlitos is presented as a tiny adult; he has the same responsibilities and chores as the adults: his breakfast routine mirrors that of his mother and during his journey he works as much as his unwilling chaperon, Enrique (Eugenio Derbez). In one scene, in which they try to hitch-hike to a town after *la migra* has arrested most of their fellow workers on a tomato plantation, the two are depicted walking along a deserted highway. The scene zooms in on the two until only their feet and shins are visible (cf. Appendix B). The focus on their feet symbolises the irrelevance of Carlitos's height and age. It is this mixture of childish, yet adult behaviour that gives the film credibility, yet allows it to openly refer to feelings and thoughts. Carlitos as a focaliser is what turns it into an 'uplifting, feel-good tale which (...) is an example of a commercial (...) take on the immigration issue that avoids any controversial political issues' as Deborah Shaw put it (2012: 234). In other words, the 'controversial political issues' are irrelevant for Carlitos, a child; his quest is for his mother. Shaw's critique, in fact, echoes the director's intentions, who explained that she 'want[ed] [the audience] to have a good time, and to feel engaged and moved' (*Women & Hollywood* 2008: n.pag.).

However, it has to be added here, that the political dimension is alluded to in the film, for example, when during Rosario's commute to work the radio host talks about the rejection of yet another law that would have permitted naturalisation for many undocumented migrants in the USA (13:00f.). Similarly, the above-mentioned scene at the tomato

plantation, which is intercepted by scenes of Rosario's looking for employment, is extradiegetically accompanied by Los Hermanos Ortiz's song 'Superman es ilegal', which overtly accuses U.S. immigration policy of racism with lines, such as the following:

aquel es güero, ojos azules, bien formado y yo prietito, gordiflón y muy chaparro (...). Hay que echar a Superman de esta región y, si se puede, regresarlo pa' Criptón. (...) ¿Qué hay de nuevo, Don Racismo, en la nación? (48:45f.)

Including these references both to legislation and popular culture, in spite of the film's overall feel-goodness, indicates a stance towards the legalisation of Latino immigrants in the USA, who already find themselves in a natural linguistic and cultural environment.

The comparison of the establishing shots for the two locations demonstrates how this is conveyed visually, and, partly audially: both locations are introduced via long shots of a street corner on Carlitos's and Rosario's respective way to the public phone, from which they speak to each other every Sunday (cf. Appendix C). While the scene, a prolongation of the morning routine, refrains from using an extradiegetic soundtrack, Carlitos's location is introduced by the off-screen voice of a vendor praising his 'naranjas dulces y frescas' as well as a cock's crow – an audial reminder of the area's rurality. Rosario's location in L.A. on the other hand, is accompanied by the smooth wave-like sound of cars passing by. Only her footsteps can be heard apart from that. Regarding its sounds, Mexico is thus portrayed as technologically less advanced, but also more communal in comparison to Rosario's solitary footsteps, which are, however, explained through her son's absence.

These distinctions are further elaborated in the scenes' visuals: Carlitos passes in front of the *Abarrotes 'La libertad'*, a small shop with the paint peeling off its walls and a makeshift food stand set up against its wall. The shop's logo, additionally, is a rendering of the statue of liberty, a blatant reference to the USA within this setting of economic dilapidation and Mexico's grey and cloudy skies visible behind it. Rosario, on the other hand, crosses a street at a sun-lit corner and in a summer dress. The lawns in the background are neatly trimmed and immaculate white fences demarcate the property of the *lavandería*

behind her. All signs are, furthermore, in Spanish. The billboard in the back even features a *Corona Extra* advertisement with the words ‘orgullosamente mexicana’ visible in the shot. The only break from this idyllic presentation is the traffic light flashing red while Rosario crosses the street. The visuals thus present a stark contrast between Mexican poverty and American abundance, which is a stylistic choice: while the run-down houses and neatly trimmed yards may be characteristic of the respective places, the weather, giving Mexico a grey and dull hue, while imbuing Los Angeles with buoyant colours is clearly a directorial decision; the American setting is thus presented as a dream-like scenario.

In fact, as mentioned earlier, Carlitos’s imaginary about Los Angeles is portrayed indistinguishably from the scene depicting Rosario’s environment (cf. Appendix D). Considering the visual possibilities to describe discrepancies between an imaginary and the reality of a place, it is striking that Carlitos finds himself in exactly the same place as his mother upon closing his eyes. This alludes to the idea that his mother is indeed in the idealised place they were hoping to reach, where they could be together and financially independent. It is this narrative frame – Carlitos’s initial imagining of a place he reaches in the final shots – that invalidates most of the critical issues questioned within the storyworld, that is allusions to legislature, such as poor working conditions and illegality, as well as the extradiegetic soundtrack. The same idealisation occurs in Rosario’s plot strand: while the very first scene of the film even portrays Rosario’s journey swimming through the dark with a group of scared migrants, only avoiding deportation because *la migra* overlooks her hidden under a bush, the last scene of the film is that of the red traffic light Rosario crossed in the opening sequence turning green. This final picture, symbolic of family reunion and a bright future, conveys the materialisation of Carlitos’s first-level imaginary. In that, *Luna* echoes ideas of earlier chicano novels, which still portrayed the possibility for financial success after periods of hardship that just had to be overcome (cf. Márquez 1983). Hence, while the border crossings themselves are portrayed as dangerous and working conditions unfavourable, the

overall impression left after the joyous reunion is that of a justification of the sacrifices, because they did bring about the change envisioned at the start of the journey – with a four-year delay.

In Ramírez-Suárez's *Ramón*, a film created due to his director's having 'un pie en Alemania y el otro en México. De allí que decid[ió] hacer [su] película entre los dos países' (Dominguez 2014: n.pag.), this idea of successful migration to the USA is questioned considering that its starting premise is staged around the opposition of Ramón's failed attempts of crossing to the USA with the easy access to Germany, where not even passport control presents an obstacle (cf. Appendix E). The initial sequence of the film, in fact, portrays Ramón during his fifth attempt to enter the USA; the corrupt *polleros* lock the truck full of migrants, including Ramón, and leave it in the desert. The border patrol agents finding the group, in fact, save Ramón's life, who might have suffered the same fate as the others pictured in Appendix E had they arrived a few hours later. The focalisation on this hapless protagonist, who is even unaware of Germany's geographical location when his friend mentions it, still less understands even a tiny bit of German (or English) before arrival is pivotal for the presentation of the destination country (cf. *Ramón*: 05:40ff.). Ramón serves as a Mexican guide discovering the unknown European place for the Mexican audience. Especially the linguistic difficulties provide ample material both for comic relief and the depiction of friendship and shared difficulties.

The dinner scene towards the end of the film exemplifies the latter neatly: Ruth and Ramón sit in the former's living room in *chiaroscuro* lighting and with slow piano music in the background. They converse without understanding a word of their interlocutor. The tone is set through the atmosphere, that is lighting and sound, and their conversation about the past – Ramón about his perceptions of Germany, quoted above; Ruth about the war and her childhood during the Third Reich – adopts the wistful tone created in this setting. More importantly, however, this tone mirrors their understanding of each other, or in Ramón's

words: ‘A veces le entiendo y está cañón porque lo que entiendo es su voz, no las palabras que usted me suelta que para mí son como ruido’ (84:10ff.). Ramón and Ruth’s friendship is based on kindness, on present interactions, especially because they are unable to communicate linguistically. In fact, both confide in each other, but it is the linguistic ignorance of the respective languages, their not understanding the other, which enables the characters’ honesty. This is clarified by Ruth who admits that she had never related this to anyone before, which is the equivalent of *Luna*’s use of a child focaliser: authenticity is guaranteed when voicing personal matters.

However, their honesty is only perceived by the spectator, who is given subtitles to understand both parties. Consequently, on the external level, this scene not only presents the proximity between the two characters through its visuals and music, it also outlines Germany both as it is supposedly for the Mexican migrant – the river with ancient castles that Ramón experiences – and as Ruth has grown to know it – with a stifling past and a generation of senior citizens who are still affected by the war: ‘der Krieg hat all den Menschen, die sich an ihn erinnern die Stimme genommen’.⁸ The film thus takes advantage of its focalisation on Ramón and the stylistic devices available for the medium to create significance on two levels: the intercultural friendship regardless of the limited possibilities to converse, and the characterisation of the destination country, both as it is perceived today and as it is more generally known: for its cruel past. The sound score and lighting weave these two together to create the wistful mood for the scene that the protagonists understand on the intradiegetic level.

Before this scene alluding to Germany’s history, however, the location itself is also presented through its visuals and in binary opposition to Mexico. As with *Luna*, both locations are introduced via establishing long shots of Ramón’s hometown, Casablanca in

⁸ My translation: ‘the war has left all of those who remember it without a voice’.

the Mexican state of Durango, and a park in Wiesbaden (Appendix F). Casablanca is first presented via a tracking shot along the train lines running past the village before the shot zooms in on the protagonist. The area is arid and the houses scattered along the tracks are in a dilapidated state. Ramón's house is presented in similar condition, without paint on the walls and low-key lighting, still less decorations (cf. Appendix G). These settings symbolic of scarcity, both due to the surroundings' natural aridity and the economic condition, preface the later depiction of the German setting, where Ramón is portrayed in a well maintained garden in front of a fountain. The townhouses in the background appear equally neat as the setting around him. However, this visually appealing scenery is accompanied by slow, nearly eerie music, which alludes to Ramón's despair, also visible in his posture: his plans have been thwarted by the disappearance of *el Güero's* aunt, who was the only one he knew in Germany. While Germany and Mexico are thus presented in similar physical and economic binaries as in *Luna*, Ramón's situation in Germany is more desperate compared to Rosario's, who lives in a tightly-knit network and crossed the border with a friend.

Other than in *Luna*, however, due to this lack of a network, the film gradually alludes to a hybridisation process by means of its visual and audial representation: after having established himself in his German setting, earning money by completing chores for the senior residents and giving dancing lessons, Ramón is depicted in Ruth's basement, which doubles as his rent-free home (Appendix H). He cooks *tortillas* and listens to *Mariachi* music. The song, 'negrita de mis pesares', is played intradiegetically. Ramón dances to it. On a first level, Ramón is depicted as feeling at ease in his surroundings, as having created a space for himself in Germany. On a second-level, however, it is shocking to consider that, in the film's visual representation, the German basement is what most resembles his house in Mexico, even seems better maintained than his mother's and grandmother's house in Casablanca (cf. Appendices G and H). The visual commentary here is an equalisation of Mexico's rural living standards with a German basement. Alonso Díaz De La Vega, one of

the film's critics, in fact, concluded that: '*Guten tag* [sic], *Ramón* vuelve al cliché que la resuelve como una especie de *Qué bello es vivir* (1946) para migrantes' (Díaz De La Vega 2014: n.pag.). His critique, albeit harsh in many places, is understandable when considering this visual representation of Mexican poverty and German wealth, and even more so in its resolution.

As Ramón's actual imaginary is not visualised, as was Carlitos's, the only indicators for his aspiration are found in his actions within the storyworld; they are clearly centred around maintaining his mother and grandmother as was shown as part of the intradiegetic imaginary. The resolution of the film – being deported, but receiving his German inheritance – is stylistically emphasised by two devices, both of which present a cliché rather than an innovative approach: Ramón buys glasses and the sun appears over Casablanca. While the glasses are an obvious marketing effort from Devlyn, for which Ramón had to squint throughout the film until its very last scenes, it is also a trope to denote his clearer vision after the migration process. With the money, he is able to perceive Mexico more clearly. At the same time, however, this hints at two Mexicos separated by socio-economic status, which are now both accessible to Ramón, through his poor past and his affluent present. The last shot of the film, furthermore, is another long shot of Casablanca (cf. Appendix I). Rather than presenting a scorching desert sun, this shot portrays a sunset tinting the area in an idyllic hue. Ramón successfully completes his quest and reaps the reward from his migration journey.

One remark regarding this happy ending, from a German perspective, that cannot be left unmentioned is the intradiegetic idealisation of the destination based on false information: especially when Ruth's bank teller assuredly informs her that she will not necessitate her savings in the future since her monthly pension would cover all her expenses even should she have to require a stay in a retirement home is plainly misguided (*Ramón*: 103:00ff.). This fairy tale vision does not depict Germany's reality, where an increasing

number of pensioners is no longer able to live off their allowances (Lietzmann 2017: n.pag.). While Jorge Ramírez-Suárez thus maintained that he ‘no quis[o] mostrar una versión rosa de lo mexicano’ (Hoyt 2015: n.pag.), he ended up with a rather ‘rosa’ version of *lo alemán*.

Both mainstream film productions thus end on a positive note, presenting the first-level imaginary as a possibility. They portray a pattern of the rewarding experience of family reunion and financial gain. While Riggen makes use of a child as a focaliser, Ramírez-Suárez’s film is presented through the vision of a hapless migrant whose linguistic ignorance accounts for the credibility of his voiced feelings. Both productions, however, ultimately fall into clichéd depictions via their happy endings that present the rewards of migration. The ‘from rags to riches’ theme, is exploited especially in *Guten Tag, Ramón*, where a migrant from one of Mexico’s poorest areas meets a rather wealthy and incredibly generous German senior citizen. Contrary to the novels, the commentary presented via the second-level voice is a justification of the hardships necessary to establish themselves in the destinations, both of which have different appeals: a tightly-knit network of co-nationals and a generous wealthy population secured through the welfare system. Referring back to the potential creation of authenticity, that is Ryan’s idea of moving from two to three dimensionality in the viewers’ mind, the films might, in fact, be perceived to present authentic scenarios to their spectators, which will be discussed in conjunction with the novels’ imaginaries in the following sub-chapter.

3.3 Migrant Imaginaries Across Media: Outlining a Third-Level Imaginary

The above analyses have revealed that differing representations of the host countries are present across media, especially regarding the facility of entry. Yet, all depart from the same notion of Self: Mexico’s poverty and corruption, a notion cemented by the fact that all of the protagonists, apart from Omar, originate from a rural environment without economic stability, while *Méjico* also portrays the rural hardships in its characterisation of *el Concho*.

These starting points counter studies surging in the early 2010s depicting Mexico as an emerging middle class society (cf. De la Calle and Rubio 2012), which were welcomed by the international press. Richard Feinberg, for example, went as far as to state that we should ‘[f]orget the alarming mass-media images of a crime-ridden, poverty-stricken Mexico’ since ‘two of Mexico’s leading public intellectuals identif[ied] the country’s expanding, prosperous middle class’ (2012: n.pag.). James M. Cypher opposed that ‘[c]laims that Mexico is a middle-class country appear to at least partly depend on a sleight-of-hand willingness to ignore the large rural and small-town populations’ and states that, in fact, ‘[s]ixty-six percent of Mexico’s families endure some form of poverty’ (2011: 64; 67). Newer statistics still point to a poverty headcount ratio of 53.2% in 2014 (*The World Bank* n.d.: n.pag.). The producers of all the fictions analysed, by depicting Mexicans from rural environments rather than one of the many urban agglomerations, thus, oppose the trend towards emphasising the middle class, by pointing towards the often forgotten areas, those that are left behind by the economic developments and concomitantly restrict their inhabitants’ possibilities to succeed financially: the Mexican migrant’s geographical Self is univocally characterised by poverty and corruption in the fictions.

While the Self does not present disparity in depiction neither through the choice of medium, nor due to the aspiration towards a certain host country, the narratives start to be divisive when it comes to the actual experiences in the Other. Here, the representation and narrative tone diverge according to the medium used: while both pairings depict entry to the USA as distinctly more difficult than to Europe, the films eventually present both destinations as similarly worthy of idealisation in their function as a source of financial gain. The novels, on the other hand, maintain a neutral stance equalising them with Mexico rather than presenting them as a complete Other, that is, the otherness is previously perceived rather than actual, while, in the films, the advantages of living in the host country directly mirror the adversities in Mexico: corruption is countered by a strong network of like-minded

migrants and poverty by a welfare state. These observations are clear from the above analyses. The question for their influence on the third-level imaginary is how they are relevant in Mexican society's general discussion of the issue.

This relevance is partly determined by the media and their distribution. Regarding the more widely available medium, Carlo Celli, adding to his aforementioned idea of decoding national identity through film, in fact, described that

The key to understanding cinematic conventions is that an audience conditioned to established narrative patterns reacts with immediacy to the presentation of an established plot line. This immediacy reinforces the cultural connection between the centralized film industry working under the coercive eye of government censors and sponsors. (2011: 4)

While, in his analysis of Mexican cinema, the emphasis on 'the essence of death fascination' introduced in connection with the *día de los muertos*, reduces Mexican national identity to only one overarching theme (cf. Celli 2011: 114), the idea of 'narrative patterns' as a strengthening of 'cultural connection' is convincing. Adding to a known master plot or grand narrative, in this case the 'from rags to riches' theme, can provoke emotional reactions in recipients, be it due to a confirmation or rejection of it. H. Porter Abbott in his *Introduction to Narrative* explained that '[w]ith regard to expectations [often based on master plots], then, there appear to be two imperfectly balanced needs: on the one hand to see them fulfilled, on the other to see them violated' (2002: 55). The films and novels at hand cater to both sides of these 'needs'. They use their plots to provide the recipients with a confirmation, or denial, of their expectations, respectively, which approximates them to differently accustomed audiences: while the films are distinctly mainstream and influenced by affirmative hollywoodesque representations, the novels are presenting a rejection of the well-established master narrative. Considering the distribution and reading statistics, the first finding for the third-level debate is thus that the mass audience is more likely to receive a positivist outlook on the issue, which is, then, strengthened through the repetition of the patterns.

This disparity between media rather than destinations is unsurprising, but, as a generalisation, indicates that those within a more intellectual sphere receive a substantially different image regarding migration than those exclusively enjoying popular cultural productions, which is reminiscent of Bartra's split into *la cultura de la tinta* and *la cultura de la sangre*. This is not to say that this is distinctly Mexican, nor that films could not equally frustrate expectations or novels confirm them. The adhesion to master narratives in the mainstream productions, however, hints at the information provided to the larger public.

Now, considering that, as briefly mentioned in the introduction, the political efforts between the host countries and Mexico differ greatly – walls vs. dual years of action –, the institutional influence, 'the coercive eye of government censors and sponsors' as Celli put it, is worth considering, especially in light of trends such as nation branding, which can be considered a marketing technique for nations. It is important to note that both of the films, in spite of their being directed by Mexicans and primarily for Mexican release, are, in fact, co-productions with companies and funding bodies from the host countries depicted in the narrative and both directors are residents of these migration destinations.⁹ Considering the immense budget necessary for their realisation and the concomitant need to sell the projects to funding bodies, the question of institutional influence is greater in the case of cinematic productions. Now, in light of the positive depiction of the host countries, the influence of such partners is impossible to deny. At the same time, the directors' positive experience with these destinations also filter the events portrayed; Ramírez-Suárez is, for example, presented as amazed by how Germany takes care of its senior citizens (cf. Dominguez 2014), while Rikken pronounced her feeling that women directors have far more possibilities in the USA than in Mexico (cf. *Women & Hollywood* 2008). Both aspects may be perceived by the directors in this way, but are disputable topics within the host societies themselves. Since

⁹ For the production companies: cf. *IMDb* n.d.a; *IMDb*, n.d.b.
For the director's whereabouts: cf. Dominguez 2014; *Women & Hollywood* 2008.

ulterior motives of a film's production cannot lead to anything but speculation, it is the question of how the spread of a narrative influences the ominous third-level imaginary, that is, the ideas people from the same region are exposed to due to their location.

Firstly, the distribution depicts that the access to material is, in fact, not spread equally throughout society and, more crucially, that the material that is more critical of migration idealisations is less widely available, which is understandable from the foreign producers' standpoint, but not necessarily the Mexican public's one. While it could, then, be argued that the novels provide a more authentically Mexican view on the issue, being produced solely by Mexicans, it has to be pointed out that they provide a more globalising or cyclical vision of migration: the smaller group, with a vested interest in literary productions is presented with a normalisation of migration via the premise that it is one step in a person's life cycle – death but also the imminent rebirth –, or that it might be a necessity for individual reasons, but that relocation is not tantamount to any sort of gain per se. In short: the geography is presented as irrelevant for financial prosperity, which is not a driving force in the novels. The greater audience, on the other hand, albeit also presented with a normalisation of migration, is shown how a geographical relocation may reap significant benefits, being a necessity to avoid the spiral of poverty in their home country. While there is no wrong or right within the third-level imaginary, it reveals this division within Mexican society – a division that could surely be found in any society –, through the possible narratives that may be 'tried on' by recipients depending on media. This would suggest a further widening of the gap between the difference audiences.

Returning to the content-level, the introduction of migration to Europe in compliance with the American Dream is of major significance. As mentioned above, the availability of material on migration to Europe is scarce. Consequently, the few recent depictions gain in importance for their uniqueness. Considering the long history with Spain, a depiction of similar depravity in Spain as in Mexico is rather unsurprising. A working class character like

Ramón, who leaves for Germany, however, is a novelty, a new place to discover. Here, another of Paul White's statements regarding the conditions in a host country should be borne in mind:

More migrants follow the path of the earlier pioneers. The world these latter move to is not the same as for the first arrivals, since the existence of past movement will have in some way altered the conditions of reception (1995: 4).

While it is difficult to pinpoint the 'pioneers' of Mexican migration to the USA, arrivals in recent years, and the past century for that matter, have without doubt arrived in a country that has been shaped by previous waves. Migration waves towards Europe (rather than from Europe) have, however, not been culturally visible so far.

This idea of pioneering also applies to the fictional sphere: the amount of previous fictions about migration to the USA allow for a more nuanced picture of the country, because the idealised portrayals, such as in *Luna*, are set off by other, previous or contemporary, depictions of the country. Both texts relating a story of migration to the USA – film and novel – in fact are just one voice within the debate, which, as mentioned several times above, has come to emphasise the drug trade in recent years both in news and fiction.¹⁰ In Herrera's *Señales*, the reader is even presented with a protagonist actively resisting the easy money made in the drug trade (cf. 68). Within the societal debate of migration to their northern neighbour, both works appear more positive than the others that have gained popularity in the past few years in spite of their representation of greater difficulty in transiting if compared to the texts portraying Europe. They are thus relativised by the other texts available.

On the other extreme, then, is the depiction of Europe, for which *Ramón* presents one of the very few, if not only, cinematic examples from the past few years. It is this uniqueness that both risks giving the narrative too much credibility, and may result in a bigger impact

¹⁰ El Chapo Guzman's several escapes and arrests would be one such news item, while a summary of cultural implications can be found in Polit Dueñas 2013.

of the latter on an individual spectator for the lack of other sources. This lack of references in society is partly reflected in the fact that both narratives to Europe refer to the USA, the master plot migration narrative from Mexico: the case of Ramón has been mentioned above extensively, but in *Méjico, el Concho*'s father is similarly described as 'un cobarde (...). Él se largó a Estados Unidos' (61). In that, the narratives openly use the familiarity of the journey to the USA and the assumption of bad conditions for new Mexican-Americans to create their fictions about Europe and, therefore, include themselves in the ongoing debate. This presents unique insights into the unfamiliar destinations, providing them with a pioneering position. By only presenting short-term migration stories, be it for deliberate reasons or due to deportation, the narratives, furthermore, avoid depicting the reality of long-term migration in these countries. These pioneering depictions, however, go unquestioned by other texts.

Now, assuming that narratives may be perceived as authentic as Ryan, Zunshine and Preußner have pointed out and considering that the narratives' ultimate outcomes are contradictory according to the medium used, these fictional depictions are relevant for the societal debate, the third-level imaginary, not only because they suggest confirmation of the statistics showing an increase in migration to the European continent, but also because they may have an impact on the stigma of migration within the society. As a recap, Ernest Renan described that the nation is built on 'the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future' (1990: 19) and Winfried Fluck referred to the abilities of fiction to 'make the imaginary accessible to individual self-fashioning as well as to cultural self-definition' (1996: 443). If mainstream fiction, through its capacity to create seemingly authentic migration scenarios, presents past sacrifices, where a migrant's life was threatened by the journey to the destination and a possible easy access to another, the future sacrifice of migration to the latter may become less stigmatised. In

other words, the migration imaginary towards Europe could become another viable prospect both for individual and cultural self-fashioning.

In short, the four main texts and both levels of their imaginary enter the societal debate regarding migration as individual voices, which either have a wider, in case of the films, or smaller audience, in case of the novels. Each ultimately presents one seemingly authentic role to try on for their recipients. The distribution of the texts, however, caters them to differently accustomed audiences, which confirms Bartra's and Paz's assumptions regarding the split in Mexican society. While this is not a distinctly Mexican characteristic as gaps between rich and poor are widening on a global scale, the different imaginaries for different societal groups portray one aspect about Mexican society: they do not provide the different groups with the same material and therefore further undermine inter-group understanding.

4 Conclusions and Further Avenues for Research

This project set out to study the representation of migration and the migrant in different media of twenty-first century Mexican fiction with a focus on the subjective rather than the empirical dimension of the process. The elaboration of the imaginaries served as an indicator for the different ideas and ideological frameworks regarding migration that are in place in Mexican society. While the narratological framework has proven to be useful in the examination of these imaginaries, the assumptions regarding the depiction of the different destination countries, that is a more negative depiction of the USA than Europe, have only been confirmed by the cinematic productions, which portray American Dream scenarios with easier entry to the European destinations and rewarded hardships in the USA. The novels, however, are equally critical of both destinations in their depiction of the geographic irrelevance for economic success despite the easy access to European countries.

Given the more widespread distribution of the films, and the normalisation of migration in all productions, one could speculate about a greater number of migrants following in the footsteps of Ramón, which would confirm the recent statistical trend and would augur a further increase in migration towards Europe. As is the case with speculations, however, this outlook is both impossible to verify and too far-fetched based on just one popular film. In fact, the normalisation of migration in the works turned out to be but a small contextual finding of the project; the main result of this discussion is the difference in portrayal, the difference in imaginaries present through the distribution of the media: the films placing importance on geography by depicting successful migration journeys, which ultimately raises the value of migration, while the novels reject the idea of a necessity to migrate in their depictions, which only corroborates migration as ‘un estilo de vida’ (Salgado de Snyder 2002: 104) in the widespread imaginary.

Now, the present discussion is obviously far from exhaustive. The scope did not allow for more than a couple of examples of emigration fiction for both media, and could not take into account any works outside of the two extremes of distribution, that is, arthouse films and more popular or bestselling novels. An analysis of migration journeys in novels, and other media, that are not distinctly migration or transcultural fiction would also add greatly to the overall depiction of migration, as it would elaborate the offhand remarks, the more unconscious depiction of migration, which could shed light on the normality of migration in non-migrational contexts. Suffice to say that this discussion’s findings are but tendencies, which need further research to be elaborated in more detail.

The field of cognitive narratology, which was a major influence in the analysis of the impact of fiction on the imaginary, is, furthermore, still in its infancy, the mind still a mystery to scholars. As was shown here extensively, however, the application of (cognitive) transmedial narratology is very fruitful for the elaboration of imaginaries in society. Ultimately, the present framework for migrant imaginaries could be applied to any

geographical context or adapted for another political debate. It is the examination of different imaginaries presented to different societal groups that is and will be worthwhile since it attempts to untangle the ideological framework that limits inter-group understanding on certain topics, which, in turn, causes polemics in society.

I want to finish this project with the idea of the benefits and possible dangers of fiction in the context of migration. Lisa Zunshine related her own experiences on arrival in the USA as follows:

When I came to this country (...), I went through one of those periods of reading fiction voraciously, going through a wild mix of novels [originally written in English] (...). That battery of “tests” must have been offering me a “guarantee” (illusory, perhaps, but still pleasing) that eventually I would be all right in the English-speaking social world (2006: n.pag.).

Zunshine refers to novels which gave her the impression of understanding the English-speaking culture that was still foreign to her on entering the country. While this is the experience of a ‘voracious’ reader, other potential migrants might use other fictional media – film, TV, comics, computer games, etc. – to create their idea of how different an unknown culture is from their own. The role of fiction in the creation of migration imaginaries is therefore substantial regardless of the medium used. The patterns presented in the different media, however, determine how certain groups of consumers perceive places and themes, and, in that, fictional media not only have the ability to familiarise their recipients with unknown ideas and locations, they also have the power to break a society up into groups or perpetuate existing divisions.

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Appendix A: Aztec Cosmovision



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Appendix B: La misma luna, 55:00 min. and 55:14 min.



Appendix C: *La misma luna*, 04:32 min. and 04:48 min.



Appendix D: *La misma luna*, 06:54 min.



Appendix E: *Guten Tag, Ramón*, 03:53 min. and 20:03 min.



Appendix F: *Guten Tag, Ramón*, 04:17 min. and 27:33 min.



Appendix G: *Guten Tag, Ramón*, 08:45 min.



Appendix H: *Guten Tag, Ramón*, 66:33 min.



Appendix I: *Guten Tag, Ramón*, 110:15 min.

